



Caring pedagogy and supervision in times of crisis and tragedy

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Abstract

In this report, I describe strategies I have developed in my teaching and program coordination to support students and faculty members in times of crisis and tragedy. I detail three significant moments of crisis which inspired my development of caring pedagogical practice and what I learned from each of these moments. Then, I discuss the idea of a pedagogy inspired by ethics of care (Noddings, 1984, 2012) and how it might frame pedagogical practice. I subsequently offer practical ideas gleaned from my own experiences, to apply pedagogical care in situations of crisis. Finally, I suggest ways to support our students, the faculty members we work with and supervise, and finally, ourselves, as foundational practice and especially in times of crisis.

Keywords: *Ethics of Care, Pedagogical Practice, Language Program Coordination, Student and Faculty Support*

APA Citation: Marshall, K. L. (2024). Caring pedagogy and supervision in times of crisis and tragedy. *Second Language Research & Practice*, 5(1), 101-111. <https://hdl.handle.net/10125/69893>

In Memory Of

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Introduction

In this report, I describe strategies I have developed in my teaching and program coordination to support students and faculty members in times of crisis and tragedy. I detail three significant moments of crisis which inspired my development of caring pedagogical practice and what I learned from each of these moments. Then, I discuss the idea of a pedagogy inspired by *ethics of care* (Noddings, 1984, 2012) and how it might frame pedagogical practice. I subsequently offer practical ideas gleaned from my own experiences to apply pedagogical care in situations of crisis. Finally, I will suggest ways to support our students, the faculty members we supervise, and finally, *ourselves*, as foundational practice and especially in times of crisis.

Context

Before discussing notable moments of crisis in my career, it is useful to provide some context on our program. I have been the French Studies Program Coordinator at a small, religious liberal arts university in the western United States since 2017. Our program is housed in the International Studies and Languages Division, one of eight academic divisions within our undergraduate college, itself averaging around 3,500 students. Our student to faculty ratio is 13:1; a ratio which our French Studies courses mirror. We offer a major and minor in French Studies and have a healthy basic language program. Just after receiving tenure, I became the program coordinator as well as the only tenured / tenure-track faculty member in French

Studies. I have thus been responsible for all decisions related to the program including discussions with faculty on pedagogical approaches and on student advising and mentorship.

Since our program is small and often partners with the International Studies program, which requires additional language study, many of our French Studies students have taken multiple courses together and have studied abroad together. Many also participate together in extracurricular clubs and activities. To further foster students' sense of belonging (Cobb et al., 2024) within our classrooms, I have encouraged the French Studies faculty to create inclusive *communities of practice* (Wenger, 1999)—social groups whose members share a common identity including shared interests and goals—in each class and throughout the program. I have also encouraged faculty to model intercultural mediation and dialogue (Kohler, 2015) through their pedagogical practice, incorporating activities which guide students to decenter and consider various cultural perspectives. To create welcoming communities of practice, we employ pedagogical principles taken from *ethics of care* (Noddings, 1984, 2012). This pedagogical stance is now part of the program faculty's ethos, but it was not always this way. It developed in part through our university's increasing attention to students' well-being and through my experiences teaching and supervising in times of crisis and tragedy. In the section that follows, I will discuss three crises that were instrumental in inspiring my own caring pedagogical practice.

I want to signal to the reader that the following section may not comport the neutral tone expected in academic discourse; I began writing it immediately after my university's most recent tragedy. It has been difficult, if not impossible, to write without emotion. The reason I am approaching this topic in this manner is that, to be frank, it is difficult to discuss the hidden emotional burdens of language coordinators without bringing them fully to light.

Moments of Crisis and Tragedy

Intercultural Mediation in Tragedy, Fall 2015

In Fall 2015, it fell to me, as junior faculty, to teach a literature course which included medieval French texts. The content was somewhat of a reach for me, so I spent a great deal of time preparing for it. I began the semester fairly confidently until I was thrown a pedagogical curveball during the second course session in which we discussed the *Chanson de Roland*, a classic medieval text. For those unfamiliar with this text, it dates from the eleventh century and features a Catholic Frank protagonist, Roland (Charlemagne's nephew), and the Crusade battles he fought against Islamic forces in today's Spain. That day during our course session, a student I knew to be from a Judeo-Christian background asked me: "*Madame, que veut dire 'Sarrasin?'*" ("Madame, what does 'Saracen' mean?"). Knowing that another of my students was Muslim, I gathered my wits and, after a quick moment of reflection, I attempted a respectful explanation. I explained that the word was used in medieval French texts to refer to Islamic forces in the Crusades. I underscored that the word was not friendly.

In preparing the course, I had not given much thought to the fact that the students' different religious backgrounds might make class discussions on medieval texts somewhat delicate, especially in a time of intensifying Islamophobia in the United States (Human Rights First, 2016). While my Muslim student was affable and seemingly nonplussed representing a religious minority, they had also expressed to me privately that they had experienced microaggressions on campus. I knew, then, that I needed to address the question in a way that would acknowledge and respectfully engage the various religious and cultural perspectives in my classroom. It was a spontaneous moment of intercultural mediation that I was ill-prepared for, and I hoped I had handled the situation appropriately.

Since this episode had happened during the second course meeting, in the weeks that followed I gave even more attention than usual to maintaining a community of practice that was both welcoming and inclusive of each of my students' perspectives. For instance, at the beginning of each class session, my students and I regularly shared about events in our lives and on campus. Before course sessions and during breaks, I observed that the student who had asked me the question on the meaning of *Sarrasin* often chatted with the

Muslim student, discussing various perspectives and cultural practices in their respective communities. In subsequent weeks, my students seemed to bond as a community of practice inclusive of cultural and religious differences.

Then, on November 13, 2015, just after 9:00 pm in France, Islamic extremists carried out a series of coordinated attacks in various locations across Paris: outside the *Stade de Paris* where a soccer game was underway, in restaurants and cafés, and at the Bataclan theater, during a concert (Ray, 2023). At least 130 people were killed and around 350 were injured. The attacks happened during the morning of my class's next meeting.

My students arrived in a state of shock, clearly unable to engage with course content. And so, for the first time in my memory, I decided to suspend instruction and host a sort of listening session (in English). I prefaced the course session by telling the students that I knew what had happened, that I was shocked and saddened, and that I did not know why such things happened. One by one, students expressed their emotional distress and asked me frank questions related to socio-political and religious tensions across the world – most of which I had no answer for. The students also dialogued with each other openly, honestly, and respectfully across religious and cultural lines, while I attempted to moderate the conversation. They identified worries common to each of them, regardless of religious or national perspective (there were four international students in the class from four different countries). And, from open dialogue, we learned that many of us had a mistaken view of Islamic beliefs. We all learned the value of intercultural dialogue (e.g., Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013), and, we all shared our collective grief.

After the students left, I remember being emotionally exhausted. I also recall a deep feeling of assurance that hosting the listening session had absolutely been the appropriate thing to do. Thanks to the bond within our community of practice, my students had leveraged their mutual trust to engage in difficult intercultural dialogue and mediation (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Kohler, 2015). I had never been trained for teaching in moments of crisis, yet, in muddling my way through, I had learned that students *want* to dialogue with each other and faculty in such times. I also noticed that sharing my own feelings and disquiet was comforting to them, even when I had no way of promising that all would be well.

Compassion First, Fall 2018

Three years after the Paris attacks, nearly to the week, our university faced two crises on consecutive days. One morning in the fall of 2018, I awakened to a university email stating that during the night around a dozen of our students had been at a club where a mass shooting had occurred; one was unaccounted for. I braced myself for what I knew would be an emotionally intense day. At noon, a university-wide town hall was held where it was confirmed that the missing student had passed. Our campus community was beside itself with grief, and, for the rest of the day, students and faculty members gathered in groups, comforting each other. Our grief was so strong that very few of us realized the wind was intensifying. Even fewer of us noticed the announcement that a wildfire had started to the north, some twenty-five miles away.

After having supported students all day while I, too, was grieving, I was relieved to go home that evening to recharge. My attempts to unwind were interrupted around 8:00 pm when my friend, who lives about twelve miles to the north of my home, texted me to say that her family had been ordered to evacuate. In just a few short hours, the strong winds, gusting at 50 and 60 miles per hour, had driven the fire half the distance to my home (and to campus). Her text marked the first time I realized that I likely needed to pack a 'go bag' for an emergency evacuation. Still reeling from the day's events, I was blindsided. I packed what I could, assuming that our call to seek shelter would come in the early hours of the morning. In the middle of the night, some students living off campus were evacuated by sheriff's deputies, waking them with urgent knocks at their doors, telling them they had to leave *right then*. Still halfway asleep, many left their computers, their books, their clothes – everything – behind, fleeing to safety. Eventually, around 6:00 am on the second day, those living on and near campus were ordered to shelter in place on campus. This is where many of us stayed until around the same time the following morning. The fire eventually surrounded our campus during the second night.

After an intense overnight fight, the fire no longer threatened our campus but was far from contained. Thanks to the valiant efforts of the ground and air teams of firefighters, our campus infrastructure remained mostly unharmed (besides smoke damage and one destroyed shed). Yet, due to the devastation in the surrounding community and the fire's continued unpredictability—taking nearly two weeks to fully extinguish—our campus remained closed for three weeks.

During the evacuation, faculty and administration dealt with many questions on how to proceed, not only in the face of double tragedies and trauma-inducing events, but also through a remote modality. We faced questions such as: Are all my students ok? Where are they now? Do they have a place to stay? How do we get textbooks and access to computers for those who evacuated without their belongings? How can we guarantee internet access for all students? How do we deliver instruction remotely? How can we possibly ask students to complete work while they continue to suffer from trauma? Yet, to stay within compliance for accreditation, we could not suspend instruction indefinitely.

Faculty members were given through the following Wednesday, not quite a week after the shooting, to situate ourselves. That morning, we attended a virtual meeting convened by our dean on what was at that point an unfamiliar new video-conferencing application called “Zoom.” Our nerves were on edge, many living within reach of the fire. The idea of pivoting to online instruction for three weeks overwhelmed many of us given our own trauma; and, our anxiety was exacerbated by the fact that few of us had taught a course even partially online.

In this Zoom meeting and in follow up communications, our senior associate dean encouraged us to extend grace and compassion to students and to ourselves in a campaign which she named “Compassion First” (Kendra Killpatrick, personal communication). She offered such suggestions as extending deadlines, creating alternative assessments, allowing open book exams, and even modifying our syllabi in ways that might support students with our chairs' approval). She emphasized that we should think creatively about how we could continue instruction and assessment in unconventional ways while still achieving our course learning outcomes. She reminded us that, as a religious institution, our mission involves both students' intellectual *and* holistic development, encouraging us to feature the latter in our interactions with students and in our instruction, even while we worked to meet accreditation standards.

In response to her directive, I made small changes to my course content and assessments. For example, instead of asking my students to learn our chapter's vocabulary on environmental disasters (scheduled content!), I asked them to propose alternative, positive vocabulary on sustainable practices, which I included in subsequent assessments. I encouraged the French Studies faculty members to think creatively about how they might also implement similar practices. As another example, two weeks after our return to campus, the basic French courses held open-book, open-note final exams. We were intrigued to see that students' grades on these exams did not greatly differ from those they had received on closed-book exams earlier in the semester. Our course learning outcomes had been achieved despite the hardships we had faced.

In this time of extreme crisis, it was affirming to know that it was not simply university rhetoric – I was encouraged to focus on students' well-being as whole persons, each with their own needs, stresses, goals, and trauma. My university's support in reshaping course content to support students' needs encouraged me to continue exploring other sorts of caring techniques and alternative assessments in my personal pedagogy after 2018 and throughout the program. This is why, oddly enough, the pandemic was not the impetus for more purposeful incorporation of care in my colleagues' and my practice. In fact, in March 2020 when everyone pivoted online, we felt somewhat equipped for the challenge due to these experiences. “Compassion First” remains our dictum to this day.

Supervising in Tragedy, Fall 2023

Two years following our return to campus after the COVID-19 pandemic and five years after 2018's twin tragedies, the fall 2023 semester began well. Several of my colleagues even commented that everything was finally beginning to feel normal again. But we have all learned to be wary of feelings of security, maybe for good reason. Just after the midpoint of the semester, I awakened one morning in October to an official

university email: there had been a traffic accident the night before and “students may have been involved.” I knew that meant there had probably been a fatality, since, in my recollection, such emails are not typically issued for injury accidents. A few hours later, we received an email confirming four fatalities, all seniors, all close friends. The impact of this tragedy was felt immediately throughout our campus community and beyond: the accident was so devastating, it eventually appeared in national and international news.

We continued to hold classes for students who wanted to be in community and have some sense of routine – a recommendation by a member of our administration who is a clinical psychologist – but attendance was not required for one week. Course content during this week was at the instructors’ discretion. The dean’s office again encouraged us to offer flexible accommodations for all students for the two weeks following the accident, and students who were more personally affected could be referred to the Student Care Team for further support.

Numb, I shifted to crisis mode automatically: I knew what to do. During the course sessions the day after the accident, I held class and played quiet music for those who wanted to be together. I also brought art supplies, and many created art. The following week, instead of scheduled instruction, I presented on two of my areas of specialty, using ad hoc handouts I had prepared for days when I might need alternative content. There was no need for students to speak or participate if they did not have the emotional strength for it; many, though, listened actively and were engaged in the topics. (Later, several mentioned that these were their two favorite days of class.)

With the fifth anniversary of the 2018 events a few short weeks later (and with the accident occurring on the one-year anniversary of a family member’s passing) this time it was especially difficult for me to support students in their grief. Enough time had passed that none of them knew of what we had been through in 2018. As I told my students: cohorts of students come and go, each facing maybe one or two significant tragedies during their undergraduate studies, but faculty members carry with them the memories of each tragedy occurring over the course of their career. Because I could sense my grief compounding, I intentionally disengaged from care for others and focused on my own self-care.

The day after the accident, I was leaving campus for some down time when I crossed paths with a colleague¹, one of our adjunct faculty members who had not taught for us in 2018 nor during the pandemic and thus had not received our previous crisis training. This colleague’s grief was profound: one of the deceased students had been a student in the Spring 2023 semester, and another was a student in their very small third-semester basic French class in Fall 2023. The student’s notably vacant chair was more than the instructor and their students could bear. This colleague recalls being “emotionally overwhelmed” but had not yet reached out to me for support, only having just sent an email to our departmental chair as he is technically our immediate supervisor.

Thirty minutes after I crossed paths with my colleague, the university chaplain’s office was set to host a webinar for faculty members on teaching and supporting students through grief while also caring for themselves. I offered to attend it with my colleague, and, afterward we discussed strategies for flexible activities and assessments in their classes for the coming weeks. My colleague recounts that the suggestions provided in the webinar and our conversation had given them a path forward which supported both them and their students in their processing their grief while eventually working again toward course learning outcomes. I checked in with the colleague with some regularity for the rest of the semester to ask how they and their students were doing and if they needed further support of any kind. In reflecting on the events some months later, my colleague wrote to me: “It is nice to work in an environment where it feels safe to be vulnerable and express difficult emotions during tragic events (of which there are more and more these days).”

From this recent experience, I learned that coordinators should offer discussions about teaching during crises to faculty members, no matter their rank. It should not be taken for granted that they have acquired

¹ They have given me their permission to include this account and their direct quotes.

this knowledge elsewhere. This is especially so as visiting and adjunct faculty may not be familiar with how much liberty they have to alter instruction or assessments. They also may not be familiar with the institutional memory and narrative (Linde, 2009) surrounding past tragedies. I realize now, too, that I should have at least emailed the faculty members that I supervise to check on their well-being. I hadn't done this, leaving my colleague at a loss for what to do. No matter how strong messaging from official channels may be on student and faculty support during crises, I see now that it is integral for coordinators and directors to reinforce such messaging with their own.

Each of these three experiences was formative in my understanding of how to teach and supervise with care during crises and tragedy. While some of the pedagogical accommodations described above had been ad hoc and somewhat intuitive, they inspired me to think about a more structured, holistic caring approach to language teaching and supervision.

Strategies for Caring Approaches to Teaching

After experiencing the above moments of crises, and others unnamed, I began researching in more earnest the notion of a caring pedagogy, one which would also reflect our institution's values. I sought one which had the potential to address not only students' socio-affective states, as is common in approaches featuring social-emotional learning (e.g., Dresser, 2013; Herrera, 2020) but also to treat them as ends in themselves (Audi, 2016), an idea stemming from the philosophical field of ethics. Audi states treating a person as an end "...surely embodies *caring*. More specifically, it entails treating the person in a way that is governed, and to some extent motivated, by caring about the good of the person (1) for its own sake (hence non-instrumentally) and (2) under some objectively satisfactory description of that good. The caring may be dispassionate. It may also be empathic or even loving" (Audi, 2016, p. 85). He argues that this is morally desirable behavior, particularly in contrast to treating a person instrumentally, or as a means to an end. Audi compares the treatment of persons as ends to the so-called Golden Rule – to love one's neighbor as oneself – proposing that "acting lovingly is akin to acting morally and at least typically *is* a kind of conduct...the directive to love one's neighbors is plausibly taken to call for loving conduct, which is end-regarding" (Audi, 2016, p. 155).

The idea of treating students as ends in themselves thus aligns well with our institution's stance on the purposes of higher education – we aim to form the whole person and foster their flourishing (Levine, 2020; Nussbaum, 2011). This is why Nel Noddings's *ethics of care* (1984), situated within the fields of feminist ethics and the philosophy of education, was particularly interesting to me. While referenced widely in the broader field of education (e.g., Bevis & Watson), Noddings's work has not been much invoked in the field of languages education except the work that my colleague and I have presented on its application in intercultural orientations to languages education (Marshall & Bokhorst-Heng, forthcoming; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). I realized as I read Noddings's work that, due in part to my institution's ethos, I had intuitively put into practice many of the elements of care ethics even before I knew of the approach.

The first element in Noddings's (1984) care ethics is *engrossment*. The idea here is that the instructor is attuned to their students' expressed needs while attempting to suspend their own biases concerning those needs. This was exemplified, for instance, in my suspension of instruction in lieu of the listening session the day of the Paris attacks. Likewise, after both the double tragedy of 2018 and last year's accident, I reached out to my students individually to see if they had any particular needs for accommodation beyond the ones offered to the class as a whole. Second, Noddings (1984) speaks to the *motivational displacement* of an instructor – that, as much as reasonable (I will return to this below), instructors put aside their needs and prioritize those of their students. Many in our profession had a taste of motivational displacement when we engaged in online instruction during the pandemic (Warner & Diao, 2022), for instance logging extra hours meeting with students living in areas of the world where students' synchronous course participation was not possible. In the above instances, as well, I offered my students flexible deadlines for assignments – even delaying most due dates until the date of the final exam. This policy enabled students to complete their assignments when they had time to focus on them. While it created more work for me at the end of

the semester, the students had the time they needed to produce quality work. Next is the idea of *reciprocity*, that students, or as Noddings calls them, those ‘cared for,’ respond to the instructor’s comportment of care. In the latter two above accounts, both in 2018 and in 2023, certain students regularly checked in to see how I was doing, sometimes via email, sometimes in person. Many thanked me for allowing them to ease back into completing coursework as they were emotionally able.

In all of this, Noddings emphasizes open lines of communication between the instructor and each of their students (‘Dialogue’), a continuity of care in the instructor’s practice (‘Modeling’), the creation of a caring community among all classroom participants (‘Practice’), and “the act of affirming and encouraging the best in others” (p. 232) (‘Confirmation’). In a caring pedagogy centered on Noddings’s care ethics, there is an “emphasis on relationship, on the affective state of the student, and on their personal growth” (Marshall & Bokhorst-Heng, forthcoming, n.p.) – the reciprocal relational component of care ethics is what particularly appeals to me given my institution’s ethos (and what, I believe, distinguishes it from, for instance, social-emotional learning, (e.g., Dresser, 2013; Herrera, 2020). In some ways this pedagogical stance suggests a narrowing of the traditional power differential between instructor and student, yet it is still up to the instructor to employ the most effective pedagogical strategies for each of their students and for the group collectively. My colleague and I have argued that these elements in particular are at the heart of establishing what we have called a “*caring community of practice*” (Marshall & Bokhorst-Heng, forthcoming), a classroom community built upon the ethos of care among its members – including students *and* the instructor – which informs an instructor’s day-to-day practice.

While a caring pedagogical stance might inform one’s day-to-day pedagogical practice, I have found it to be crucial in times of crisis. With communication and care previously established among all class participants, in crisis, pivoting instruction and assessment is as smooth as it could be. To the extent that they are able to offer it, students’ feedback in shaping the pivot gives them agency in their navigation of the crisis. For instance, the week after the accident in 2023, I chose which content to cover during the first course session and asked my students to vote on what they would like to do for the second. I offered only two options, as I learned from my own reaction to events in 2018 that it is difficult to make decisions in times of intense emotional duress. It is important, too, to reach out to each student about their particular needs. For instance, maybe one had to evacuate their apartment only to return to find it smoke-damaged, condemned, and unenterable; maybe another knew one of the victims; and maybe others were hardly affected by the crisis and would simply like for things to return to normal as soon as possible. We, as instructors and supervisors, are tasked with creating a classroom community of practice where each of these students feel welcomed and supported. This is why the idea of teaching from a positionality of care from the outset appeals to me: in times of crisis, we can draw on the caring community already established and move forward together with our students as best as we can.

Here are some practical recommendations of caring practices in teaching and supervision in times of crisis that I have gleaned from my experiences:

- Read your university’s and supervisors’ communications carefully to understand liberties allowed in instruction and assessment in times of crisis.
- Within university and departmental parameters, be empowered to suspend or offer alternative modes of instruction and assessment, and encourage those you supervise to do so. Aim to contextualize alternative instruction and assessment within course outcomes.
- Keep regular meetings: routines and community are important for students’ and our own mental health (Scholz, 2023).
- Take care to refer struggling students to appropriate resources; follow up with them regularly.
- To the extent that you are comfortable, let your students know that it is a difficult time for you, too. Students appreciate knowing that the emotions they are feeling are valid and experienced by someone they respect.

- Ask students for input on how to proceed with course content and assessments. Limit their choices.
- Finally, give faculty and graduate assistants clear and regular communication on accommodations in their instruction and assessment and on their attention to students' and their own well-being. It is also helpful to have a list of contact information to offer them for student and faculty support services.

Strategies for Caring for Yourself and For Your Colleagues

You may be thinking that teaching from a caring stance in a time of crisis and grief sounds emotionally taxing. It is. You may also think that teaching like this goes well beyond our contractual obligations. Perhaps it does. Noddings's work has, in fact, been critiqued for its potential to overburden the teacher emotionally and for its potential to create a relationship of enablement between teacher and student (Hoagland, 1991). The emotional labor of language program coordination, too, is not to be trivialized (Warner & Diao, 2022). Bearing in mind these critiques, it is still not clear that we can avoid attunement to our students' affective states, nor that we *should*. With university students' mental health needs steadily increasing (e.g., Sharp & Theiler, 2018), faculty—including graduate assistants—are positioned as important nodes in their support system (Cobb et al., 2024). Thus, though caring for our students' mental well-being and affective state may not be technically part of one's contractual obligations, it seems the ethical thing to do.

How, then, does one maintain boundaries and care for oneself while supporting students and faculty in a time of crisis? To answer this question, I will draw on practices that have been the most useful to me, from 2018 onward, which echo strategies mentioned in the webinar that my colleague and I attended (Scholz, 2023), bearing in mind that this list is tailored to my own proclivities. First and foremost, time in conversation with friends and loved ones has been integral in processing my trauma. This idea is supported by empirical research: López-Zerón and Blow (2015) have suggested that: "improving individuals' closest relationships and understanding how those relationships can be a source of strength and healing can be a crucial element in addressing the problems that affect trauma survivors' physical and mental health" (p. 593). For me, music, too, is key, whether listening to it, playing an instrument, or singing in an ensemble (e.g., McFerran et al., 2020). I have also been replenished by spending time in nature (e.g., Poulsen et al., 2016). In memory of the student who passed in 2018, for instance, I sowed native wildflower seeds – some of which still bloom – across the charred ground surrounding our campus. Research has shown that aerobic exercise or other sorts of physical activity may help in recovery from PTSD (Hegberg et al., 2019), which for me takes the form of ice dancing. Additionally, I have found knitting to be especially soothing. I had mentioned this to students before, and some weeks after 2023's accident, several asked me to teach them to knit. About ten students came to the event I arranged and later expressed how calming it had been. I later learned that knitting and other fiber arts can be a way of coping with personal and shared trauma (e.g., Altschwager, 2021). Finally, as Sholz (2023) emphasized in the webinar, I have found that for me, it is important to balance time with others with time alone to process my trauma. I have learned that prioritizing my own physical and mental health is the foundation for being able to support my students, colleagues, and friends.

There is, of course, tension here, particularly at an institution where concepts like "vocation" and "service" are regularly evoked. More than once, I have overtaxed myself, perhaps taking the institution's ethos a bit too much to heart. And, during the pandemic, I very nearly burned out of the profession. After that low point, I began to internalize the idea that, "You have to have something in your own bucket to be able to fill up someone else's," and I made a point to prioritize self-care more intentionally. It is a delicate balance that I still work to maintain.

It is also important for such work to be recognized. Following the pandemic, our undergraduate college launched its *Impact Award for Outstanding Service to Students*, which honors faculty and staff members who have contributed in a meaningful way to student mentorship and development. Any community member may make a nomination, including students. The award is not merely honorary; a monetary stipend

accompanies it. This is one way in which the emotion labor central to student care - and ultimately at the heart of most higher educational institutions' missions - might be formally recognized and seen.

Returning to the question, then, of the professional appropriateness of language coordinators' caring stance and emotional vulnerability with students and colleagues, I would say that a lot depends on your institution's ethos and on your personal comfort level. I am not proposing that we should make our private lives public or treat our students as close friends. I simply want to underscore that throughout our careers, crises will occur, and our students and those we supervise will need support, as will we. If we have a collection of caring strategies gathered in our pedagogical crisis 'go bags,' along with strategies for self-care, we will have a (slightly) easier time navigating times of crisis and tragedy.

Conclusion

As I mentioned before, I began this report in the wake of the October 2023 tragedy. I had no real intention of finishing it, considering it more a sort of therapy than a publishable text. After all, who shares their emotions in an academic publication? My resolve changed the day I submitted my final grades for the fall 2023 semester. I was glad to bookend the semester and happily compartmentalize it as I had in the past, relieved it was over. But, immediately after submitting my final grades, I opened a major national news website. Staring back at me were images of the students we had lost in October; their story was again circulating, this time as featured national news. They could not—should not—be so quickly forgotten. A new wave of sadness hit me, and I wondered how many of my colleagues, language program directors and coordinators at other institutions, had experienced similar tragedies in their campus communities—I know of some, while others remain unspoken. In that moment, I resolved to finish the piece, hoping it might encourage wider conversation on how we can better support one another and those we supervise in bearing the hidden emotional burdens encountered in times of crisis and tragedy.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank her colleague for her permission to share her story, as well as her French Studies students for their encouragement in seeing this report to publication. She also thanks Senior Associate Dean Kendra Killpatrick for filling in some of the context behind her support of the Seaver faculty in times of crisis and tragedy. The author is particularly grateful to Dr. Mason Marshall for introducing her to the ethical concept of treating persons as ends. Special thanks, too, to Dr. Wendy Bokhorst-Heng for her willingness to explore ethics of care in French immersion education, for her comments on this manuscript, and especially for her unwavering care and friendship over the past decade. Finally, the author is grateful to the anonymous reviewers and Editors Senta Goertler and Jesse Gleason for their insightful suggestions which added depth to this report.

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