

Making the Connections 1

I'm doing everything I can: But I'm not seeing the success I hoped for

You might say:

I hear about violence and learning but I don't know how it applies to my teaching. I know I did have a woman in my class last year—Sarah—her sister Mary said that Sarah's husband Dan hits her— they were all in the class—I liked Dan he was always polite to me, but he did always need to be the best. Other than that— no— and I have enough to worry about without adding something else—so many students aren't really motivated and don't show up half the time.

But did you know:

Violence might affect what happens in your classroom more than you realize. It is highly likely more than a few people in your program—students, volunteers, you or your colleagues—have been hurt, abused, harassed or mistreated. Perhaps they, or you, don't talk about it, and haven't thought consciously about how the experience affects learning and teaching.

Violence is widespread. Statistics don't really give us a clear picture of the extent of violence. They don't reveal all forms or degrees, or show that some groups are more vulnerable to violence than others, but they do show us that the problem is too large to ignore. One estimate is: "51% of women have experienced at least one incidence of violence since the age of 16¹."

Violence doesn't only happen in some other culture or community; rather, it happens to children and women of all ages everywhere. It also affects men, particularly gay and disabled men, and men whose race makes them targets. Some systemic inequalities and injustices are in themselves violent and increase vulnerability to violence. Such systemic inequalities include poverty, sexism, racism, colonialism, and discrimination against the old and people with disabilities. (For instance, a poor person may have to live where gangs rule the streets, a disabled person may be targeted by a rapist, and a person who endured residential school may become an alcoholic.) In every culture and community, people work to end both violence and cultural support for violence.

The details of violence look different in every culture. Violence in our own culture may be so familiar we don't notice it. A useful definition of violence is "*any way we have of violating the identity and integrity of another person*"² Violence is on a continuum, from humiliating to life-threatening. Moreover, people may not think of their experience as violence. Instead, they may say they have been hurt, or been through tough times, or see the harsh or humiliating treatment as normal—just "the way it is"—or even something they caused.

This set of information sheets is a chance to consider this issue, to take a second look and learn about ideas to help you teach more effectively, increase learning, and take better care of yourself

¹ Statistics Canada, Violence Against Women Survey, 1993.

² Parker Palmer, page 169, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*. Jossey Bass, 2004

and others. Addressing the impact of violence on learning is not as difficult as you might think, and it may transform some of your most frustrating challenges, leading to more success for everyone.

How does looking at the impact of violence support learning?

There are impacts in the classroom which might result from violence. They make learning hard, and teaching frustrating. Students may:

- have trouble remembering, seem not motivated, or not to pay attention;
- start and stop and not attend regularly, miss important tests and tasks;
- be always angry and loud and ready for a fight, not settle and focus;
- not connect with or value others, or themselves, put themselves and others down;
- have been told learning disabilities, ADHD, intellectual disabilities, or mental health “disorders” explain all their learning difficulties.

New approaches will help ALL students. They are vital to success for many survivors of violence, but they are also good teaching practice for everyone. We don't need to know who has been through violence if we use these approaches and teach every group assuming that at least some people will have lived through some degree of violence.

What can I do to help everybody learn?

1. ***Make it visible that violence is widespread.*** Provide resources to help people address the violence in their present or past if they choose.
 2. ***Talk with students and colleagues about the impact of violence on learning.*** Try to make sure no one feels they have to tell their story. But make it OK to have a difficult story.
 3. ***Develop curiosity about behaviours while avoiding judgement.*** Consider how behaviours that get in the way of learning may have once helped with survival, and how you can gently support somebody when they want to try to change old patterns.
 4. ***Create safer learning environments.*** Make your space free of all shaming and echoes of violence, including that directed at self. Intervene to reduce violence, however subtle.
 5. ***Create conditions to support learning.*** Feed emotions, spirit, body and mind. Feeling joyous and hopeful, valued and valuable, comfortable and well-fed, capable and smart, all support learning.
 6. ***Create connections.*** Build trust, create community, and connect to counselling, creative, and self-care resources for self and students.
 7. ***Create curriculum.*** Use activities that bring the whole self—body, mind, emotions, and spirit—to learning and that acknowledge the impact of violence in many of our lives.
- Each of these approaches will be explored in detail in the other information sheets in this set.

Where can I find more information and ideas?

Each of the remaining five information sheets in this set will look at a learning problem through a typical journal entry and give more information about what might lead to the problems practitioners see. You will find approaches to try and more information on www.learningandviolence.net, which is a major resource on the issue. To start, read the [Overview](#) and the [Problem](#) For statistics check several places in [Violence](#) or elsewhere on the internet for example: [SACHA: http://www.sacha.ca/home.php?sec=17&sub=43](http://www.sacha.ca/home.php?sec=17&sub=43)

Making the Connections 2

I can't teach the students who aren't really there

You might say:

I sometimes wonder what's going on for some of my students. Today Julie seemed to be lost in space—when I asked her what was wrong she started but couldn't explain. Half the group didn't do the work I set for them last week and the very students I planned the class for today didn't show up—grrrrrr. It's so frustrating. Then there are those new women: Esther talked a lot about what she wanted to learn—she seemed so keen—but only came for a couple of days and I haven't seen her since. Bev seems like a different person some days than others—I don't know what's going on—or how to teach her.

But did you know:

Julie might be lost in space, and other students, like Esther, stop and start and miss class because they live with the aftermath of violence. Violence can lead many of us to learn to space out—leave our bodies and take our mind somewhere else. Often called dissociation or day-dreaming, this may have been vital to survive an unbearable situation, but it may become such a habit that we don't know when we are doing it. The more that violence has shaped our nervous system, the less anxiety is needed for us to space out. When this happens a lot we may look lazy or unmotivated, mentally ill, or learning or intellectually disabled.

Students may:

- miss all or part of a lesson or course and find it hard to fully understand the whole;
- space out and run away from things that make them anxious, so that they miss tests, fail to complete work on time, blank and completely “forget” assignments;
- be restless and have trouble getting started, or persisting with a task;
- be inexplicably unable to hear, or see, or read—whenever they get anxious;
- often arrive late to class, and stop and start again repeatedly;
- have trouble trusting other students, the teacher, or even trusting their own knowing;
- seem not too “bright,” as if “no one is home,” or simply a little odd.

In the face of threat that feels life-threatening we prepare to fight, flee, or freeze. Those who are unable to flee or fight, especially babies and young children, become totally immobile, freezing like a deer in the headlights. Repeated experiences of threat can lead even the tiniest change to feel terrifying, triggering this response. When triggered, the frontal lobe of the brain—the area of complex thought—closes down while the blood supply goes elsewhere preparing for survival. Frequent repetition strengthens this pathway that makes the frontal lobe—and our path to learning—close down. Although it was originally a vital response to a threat, it may become an automatic response to change or a slight risk.

Some student absences from class may be because escape into alcohol, or recreational or prescription drugs, is a way they can “space out” and get relief from unbearable anxiety. Students and others may struggle with addiction and may use the substance more if school or work is too stressful. Too much violence can make reality totally unbearable. Some people, for whom school was a safe place, escape into the world of the mind as a way to leave the unpleasantness of body behind and may do well at school (often at a cost of physical health). Too

much violence can also lead to a more permanent escape from the real world into “craziness,” a fragmented self, (Bev may be an example) and a diagnosis of mental illness.

What can I do to help everybody learn?

1. *Make it OK to space out.*

- Introduce the different faces of spacing out, and help everyone to see them as everyday common occurrences for many people, students and teachers alike.

2. *Help students to stay present*

- Think and talk about what everyone can do to make the classroom, tests, and assignments feel safer, and lead to as few anxious reactions as possible.
- Talk with students having difficulty about what might help them stay present. Look for what you or the group can do—for example, avoid shouting—and things the individual can do. For instance they might be less likely to space if they sit near the door or where they cannot easily look out the window (and “leave” with whatever is passing by).
- Teach everyone ways to soothe, step down from anxiety, and ground in the present: include such things as rubbing the palm of one hand with the thumb of the other hand, rubbing their hands on their thighs, breathing exercises, and meditation.
- Provide pipe cleaners, modeling clay, or stress balls. Explain to students that fiddling with these might help them stay present. Encourage them to try them out.

3. *Make it OK to leave*

- Recognize that sometimes a person may be too caught in an old memory, or too stressed, to stay present. Encourage them not to judge themselves if they space out.
- Provide a comfortable chair in the corner of the room as a temporary retreat. This may help students create a new pattern, instead of spacing out or leaving the room entirely when they are anxious.

4. *Make it OK to return*

- Talk with individual students to see whether you can help them return when they space out. What helps one person might be wrong for another person. One person might want you to touch their shoulder, another to call their name gently, and another to ignore them until they can bring themselves back to the present.
- Call students who miss class to encourage them to return. Welcome them back with no hint of criticism if you can.

5. *Make it OK to need help*

- It is ordinary; most of us need help at some point in our lives. Bring therapists and counsellors into the program and provide resource information.
- Help students to understand connections between trauma, addictions, and illness. Tell them about resources and programs. Try not to shame—remember you don’t know what they “should” do. Encourage them to explore resources when they are ready.

Where can I find more information and ideas?

On www.learningandviolence.net. In the [*Impacts of violence on learning*](#), especially *Spacing out*, *Silence*, *Missing school*. In: [*Helping others learn*](#). In what to do [*When you feel bad*](#).

I find it hard to teach when some students are disruptive

You might say:

I'm struggling to know how to respond to the "lads"—the whole group of young guys seem to be always ready for a fight and to blame somebody else for starting it—but Stan particularly worries me—he is so loud and angry. When he's around I notice some of the women sit as far away from him as they can, especially Val who always seems so anxious and sits there waiting to be told what to do. When the whole gang are there most of the women are pretty quiet. I have threatened to chuck the guys out but I'm not sure they care that much. I'm scared some real violence is going to erupt and the more I try to set consequences and stop them from behaving like this the worse it seems to be getting.

But did you know:

The angry, loud students may be struggling with the need to feel in control and to connect. They may not feel there is a lot of point in studying because they don't really believe they will have a future. At that moment when we experience major violence, all control is taken away from us. We may feel utterly isolated, even when others are sharing the experience. It may seem that life will end, there will be no future. Ongoing struggles around control of oneself, others and the environment, connecting with oneself and others, and finding meaning and belief in a future may continue to shape our lives.

Students may:

- seem to believe they can never have control—act like a victim;
- insist on total control;
- switch between total control and total helplessness in an instant;
- ask permission for everything, and take no initiative (like Val);
- look for someone else to blame as a way to regain a sense of control (like the lads);
- explode angrily when it seems others are trying to control them (like Stan);
- be terrified by loud, angry people or tensions and perhaps space out in response;
- be disconnected—isolated and alone—even disconnected from themselves;
- act out and bully, hurt themselves or others;
- be part of a gang or clique—seeking to belong and connect;
- not ask for help when they need it;
- not seem to believe in a future, or to care about “consequences.”

In the aftermath of repeated sense of threat, even a pleasant surprise, something exciting, or new, can be registered as danger, leading the analytical thinking portion of the brain to close down. The “lads” may be anxious and hiding it as they respond aggressively to everything, even a look or a request, as if it were life-threatening. This reaction may also explain why many students are unable to settle and seem always ready to “fight.”

Traumatized children often believe they won't live to be adults. If there is no future, then why not take risks, take drugs or commit crimes, why try to stick at studies for the future? If this is the experience of any of the “lads,” talking of “consequences” is not likely to have much effect on their behaviour, except that they will think you are trying to control them, and react to that.

What can I do to help everybody learn?

1. *Develop curiosity about behaviours while avoiding judgement*

- Try to be curious about where any frustrating or counter-productive behaviour may have come from. Talk about it as ordinary in the aftermath of trauma.

2. *Encourage learners to take control of their learning*

- Create regular structures to give options, without anxiety-producing openness. For example, team teaching to offer an “inhale” room—where something is taught—and an “exhale” room—where students choose what to do, allows students to control their own learning. (Thanks to Kate Nonesuch from BC for this idea.)
- Try to be creative rather than confrontational. For example, another idea from Kate Nonesuch is a rule that students should refuse to be bored in her class. When students say they are bored she works with them to make it better. What would change the boredom to interest—is it too easy, hard, or disturbing? This provides a way to work towards change.
- Stand side by side with a student and point out the problem you both need to find a solution for, rather than confronting them face to face and criticizing who they are.
- Avoid any possibility of humiliation or shaming. Talk quietly with a student alone about a problem and how to address it, not in front of their peers, or other teachers.

3. *Create connections, community and as safe a learning environment as possible*

- Carry out frequent activities to help students to get to know each other well.
- Recognize the whole person—help students to feel physically comfortable, emotionally safe, nurture spirit and self-esteem, and help them feel smart and capable.
- Work with the students to set boundaries and make sure the classroom is as safe and comfortable a place as possible for everyone. Make sure any student whose behaviour might scare others leaves, until their behaviour changes.
- Prepare to address violence if it should erupt. Know who you can call for help.

4. *Help students believe in their future*

- Help students to see gradual change in their success at their studies. This helps them learn to see “middle ground” and get out of “all or nothing” reactions.
- Create holistic curriculum that encourages students to express themselves in many different forms including music, visual arts, and movement, as well as words.

Where can I find more information and ideas?

On www.learningandviolence.net.

In the [*Impact of violence on learning*](#)—especially *Acting out*, and *Lost hopes and dreams*.

In how to deal with [*Violence in your learning space*](#).

In [*Helping others learn*](#).

If I find out about violence, what should I do?

You might say:

I'm worried about Mary. She just doesn't seem herself these days—she's exhausted, and barely concentrating—I asked her if everything is OK and she said yes—I'm just not convinced—but I don't know what I should do. Then there's Stephen—he wrote in his journal about how tough his childhood was and how he feels as if he is right back there when we are reading "My Name is Rose." I don't know what to say to him—or whether I should say anything.

But did you know:

Mary might be dealing with controlling and abusive behaviour by a partner, child, another family member, or a caregiver. Abuse and threats often get worse when a student starts in a program and looks as if they might be able to escape the control. The harassment may be subtle or obvious, may be new or ongoing. It may include stalking and threats, or put downs that make it harder to learn. Even when we're not told what is happening, there are things we can do. Silence when we suspect something is going on can make it look as if we think violent behaviour is OK.

A woman who is being mistreated in the home may have an especially urgent need for success in her education program. She may need to improve her education, and her confidence, to believe that she can cope alone and get a job. This powerful need for success may make success even more elusive as it adds more anxiety and stress—closing down the brain. Similarly, immigrant students may urgently need to improve English and literacy skills to settle in a new land. Many may come from war and refugee camps. They may have lived through many forms of personal and social violence back home, on their journey, and in Canada. Many aspects of the curriculum—such as families, holidays, and homeland—can remind them of these tough experiences and huge losses.

Like Stephen, many students may find memories of childhood abuse return with the tensions and school-like settings of adult education. Many adults who were abused, hurt, or humiliated in childhood feel they ought to have got over it if it is long past, but even after years of therapy and healing, past experiences can easily return in the present. When the violence was in school itself, especially in residential and institutional schools, returning to school as an adult may be a terrifying experience that brings back personal, family, and/or community memories of threat and humiliation. Silence doesn't make the feelings go away, but telling the stories is not the answer either. Addressing the current feelings and impact on present learning may make a difference.

What can I do to help everybody learn?

1. *Help them find the resources they need*

- Provide contact information for the local resources—including counsellors, indigenous elders, shelters, abusers' courses, addictions and substance abusers programs, survivors' groups, and other support groups.

- Display posters and brochures from agencies that make it clear that no one has to endure being treated badly, or memories of bad experiences, alone. Show where to go for help. Some programs display this information in the washroom so people can take the information privately.
- Bring counsellors and local agency staff you respect into class at the beginning of a group. Assume all groups will include students who are familiar with violence and mistreatment—make sure people know the resources in case they want to use them.
- Try not to say “You should...” and suggest we know what another person needs, or judge them for not leaving a violent situation. It is important to remember we never know the risks and losses someone else will have to face if they stay or leave. But if we are afraid for their safety in the choice they are making, we can warn them.

2. *Prepare ourselves and our programs*

- Figure out our own limits. We do not have to listen to details of violence; instead we can help someone understand they need a good listener and that we can not fill that role for whatever reason. We can help them find the support they need.
- Become a good “side support.” Don’t just pass a student on to a counsellor—ask how it’s going and whether the counsellor is helpful. Help them find another resource person or program if the first is not a good match.
- Learn about our program’s confidentiality policy. If there isn’t one, think through issues of confidentiality before students confide in us. Make sure that we are clear when we would need to break confidentiality, why, and with whom.

3. *Keep our focus on teaching and learning*

- Make it clear that there is never an expectation that anyone reveals their own experiences with hardship and violence. When a person does tell some of their story try to be careful not to shame, or suggest that it was wrong to tell, or that it is too overwhelming to hear. Help the person find good supports, and don’t treat them differently, as if they are fragile or heroic. Remember there may be more still unsaid.
- Carefully introduce any class content which may remind of harsh experiences. Describe what is in the material so that students can make their own choice whether to participate or not. Make it OK for a student to say that they want to continue with an assignment or prefer to opt out of reading a particular book, for example, or watching a video, or writing an assignment. Try not to press for reasons, but be sensitive, and check whether they have the supports they need.

Where can I find more information and ideas?

On www.learningandviolence.net.

In *Making changes*: [*Personal Safety*](#) and [*Making stories of violence known*](#).

In [*Helping others learn*](#): look for the pop-up window on working with a counsellor.

In [*Helping yourself learn*](#), especially sections on [*Finding helpers*](#) and [*What to do when you feel bad*](#).

I'm too tired: I'm not good at taking care of myself

You might say:

I wish I had a holiday soon—I'm getting so worn out. When I get close to students I hear such terrible stories about their lives I can hardly bear it. I try to protect myself by not learning too much about what some of them are dealing with. I don't know how they cope with all that and school. As if that's not enough I am always having to fill in forms and reports to be "accountable" for the piddly dollars they give me and it takes for ever. My administrator doesn't really get why I am so exhausted or what it is I am doing when I only work with such small groups. She tells me I get too involved and that I'm not a counsellor. I'm too tired in the evenings to do much more than slump in front of the TV—and I definitely don't have any time or energy for anybody else in my life who is needy. It's not how I want to live. Sometimes I feel I'm just looking for someone to blame and I worry that it may be time to look for a new job!

But did you know:

When we put out more than we get back we can quickly and easily feel depleted. Literacy work is extremely complex yet there is little recognition of all the elements of this work. Literacy work is also usually under-funded and poorly paid. You may be hunting for funds, dealing with funders' demands, managing the administration, supporting tutors, and working directly with students. Most programs cannot afford to employ as many practitioners, or to have as large and comfortable a space, as are really needed. There is rarely funding for counsellors and other supports for practitioners or students. Scarcity is a reality of the work and can lead us to feel there is never enough of anything—including time to do a good job, or appreciation for our hard work.

The hard times students have been through can make it challenging for them to learn and so leave them, and us, frustrated with the lack of success. Students are often struggling with the lack of many resources and may feel humiliated by workers in many of the services which are supposed to help them. They may live in areas where violence is widespread on the street along with the drug trade and have few options to get out. They may be terrified for their children and worry about their future. In this context it can be exhausting to work on reading and writing, for both teachers and students. We may all feel helpless to affect the bigger picture.

Some of us get involved in adult literacy work because we are eager to create change, or we may want to "help" others. Our own past experiences may shape this desire and contribute to our empathy for others. But it can exhaust us when those we are working with either remind us of our own issues, or seem to have such big issues that we feel we can not complain about anything.

Many of us just keep pushing ourselves rather than finding ways to slow down and take better care of ourselves. If we are to hold on to well-being and continue to help ourselves and support others, we need to find ways to stop and figure out the best ways to nurture ourselves. As Edmonton therapist Heather Bain suggested, we need to "include ourselves in the circle of care."

What can I do to help everybody learn?

1. *Address self-care in the program*

- Meet with a counsellor as a group or individually to take care of your own issues and strengthen your work with students. If your setting doesn't include counsellors, try to find special funding, placement students, or counsellors who will volunteer their time.
- Talk about self-care in staff meetings, share ideas and resources, encourage everyone to look after themselves. Try to shift the common culture of valuing over-work and replace it with one that values self-care, regular rest and food breaks, and good boundary setting.
- Address issues of safety. Make sure everyone is aware of a safety plan and what to do if crises erupt, or if anyone is threatening the safety of themselves or others.
- Create a culture in the program of acknowledging and valuing the hard work everyone does: the practitioners, volunteer tutors, board members, and students. Don't ignore the need to value your colleagues and yourself, thinking only about students and volunteers.

2. *Take on self-care*

- Move through hard places; work with the emotions and feelings of being overwhelmed when they come up—don't stuff them down. If you find that working with people who were mistreated reminds you of your own experiences, or makes you extremely angry or sad, access your supports. Meeting with a therapist or elder might help work through your own issues.
- Gather your strength: make sure you take time to escape, to play, to have fun, to nurture and to replenish yourself through relaxing, physical exercise, or time spent in nature.
- Create and express yourself. Make space in the program and in your life to tell your stories and to create, using whatever media draws you.

3. *Help learners to take on their own self-care*

- Include self-care as part of the curriculum. Help students to learn to take care of themselves when they feel bad or overwhelmed. Encourage them to think about how to set their own boundaries and take care of themselves at home too.
- Provide conditions for self-care. Where possible include healthy snacks and drinking water for everyone in the program.
- Create a learning environment which nurtures all parts of the self. For example think about sounds, sights, physical comfort, emotional safety, and ways to provide inspiration and nurture the spirit.

Where can I find more information and ideas?

On www.learningandviolence.net. The entire [Taking Care of Self](#) section is full of activities to explore. What to do [When you feel bad](#) gives an easy-to-read list of things to do.

[Helping others learn](#) shows many of the conditions for learning, especially the video about creating *Sacred Space*.

I despair: What's the point of teaching adults when nothing changes and their kids are going to have the same problems

You might say:

I can't bear it—I listen to Jo as she talks to her kid and I don't know what to do. She is so angry with him and I saw her whack him the other day. We have a policy of no hitting at the school and I worry if she's really hurting him—should I report this to children's services but I don't really believe it will help anything. I listen to the parents in the program talk about their kids and it's clear they are having many of the same problems in school that their parents did. Many of the students are really worried about this—they so want their kids to do better than they did. What on earth can we do to make a difference? Will anything ever change?

But did you know:

When we are in a tough place now, or if our parents were abusive, hurtful, or neglectful, it is very hard to develop the capacity to give children the positive environment they need. There can be complicated emotions when our children have opportunities that we didn't have, especially when they still complain, misbehave, or get into trouble. Sometimes parents are unhappy when children receive attention, particularly in the literacy program which they may feel should belong to them, and especially if there have been few places in life where they have been given attention and valued.

Educators often insist that parents help their children learn, but when parents are afraid they do not read well enough, are not smart enough to help, or when children's school work brings up bad memories of their own experience, they may avoid helping with school work. They may "forget" and do nothing. Alternatively, they may get angry with the child, as if it is the child's fault that the parent is afraid of being unable to help, feeling stupid, being shamed, or remembering past pain.

Many parents may be afraid for their children. Living in poverty increases the dangers that children will get sick, be hurt, join gangs, get into trouble with the law, or be taken away by children's services. These fears may lead parents—especially those who are subject to racism, intellectually disabled, or who have been entangled in the psychiatric system—to be desperate to get their children back in line quickly when they misbehave.

Bearing witness to violence can be draining. We can easily lose hope for humanity when we pay attention to the dreadful things that happen in this world. But it may be equally exhausting to put our heads in the sand to try to avoid the pain. We need to find a balance of paying attention and acknowledging the evil that is perpetrated, yet avoiding relentless attention to every detail. We need to recognize that humans have a capacity not only for evil but also for great generosity and kindness. For many of us holding onto hope is important to balance the despair.

When as literacy practitioners we are surrounded by people who are struggling with difficult circumstances, and we are all working with limited resources, it may be hard to believe that change is possible. The system can feel utterly impenetrable and we may slide, without consciousness, into blaming the individuals in front of us. We may think, “Why don’t they bother to read to their children?” or some other critical thought. We need places to take those feelings—to give ourselves and each other reality checks, and to avoid becoming bitter and despairing. All or nothing is so common a consequence of trauma that it shapes much of society. It can lead us to believe that if we don’t see the full success we hoped for, there is only failure. We need to recognize incremental change—the middle ground—to avoid burnout and despair.

What can I do to help everybody learn?

1. Support parents to help their children

- Create a group, or occasional gathering, for parents to talk about the challenges of parenting. Make it OK to talk about complex feelings if they are present.
- Help parents to learn how to spark and support their children’s learning and avoid discouraging or shaming, and putting out the learning flame.
- Create children’s programming and model supportive ways of engaging with children’s learning, good boundaries, and gentle discipline.

2. Hang on to a belief in the future and the possibilities for change

- Look for opportunities to explore “middle ground” and help students, volunteers, and staff move out of “all or nothing” ways of thinking: we may not be perfect parents, teachers, or students, but we aren’t dreadful either. Over time we can learn to notice and record small increments of change; perhaps we can map the change in some fun way, with a collage, a graph, or a journal to show the change over a week, a month, or a year.
- Try not to look to students’ success to help you feel good about your work. They have enough to do! Look for other places where you can be “fed.”
- If appropriate in your program you could hold a dreaming dreams party! Create a playful and fun time to explore dreams for children, self, the world, to live in peace.

3. Increase the circle of people addressing the impact of violence on learning

- Teach other practitioners, tutors and students to address the impact of violence on learning.
- Create, or join, a network of practitioners in your region acknowledging and addressing the impact of violence on learning.

Where can I find more information and ideas?

On www.learningandviolence.net. In *Changing education*: family literacy (once a new information sheet by Heather Lash is added)

Explore [Making Changes](#) for ideas on how to work towards community change.

Check out [Dreams of a different world](#) to think more about how intervening in cycles of violence might help to create change.

Check out [Learning to teach](#) for resources to help you teach others about how to address the impact of violence on learning.