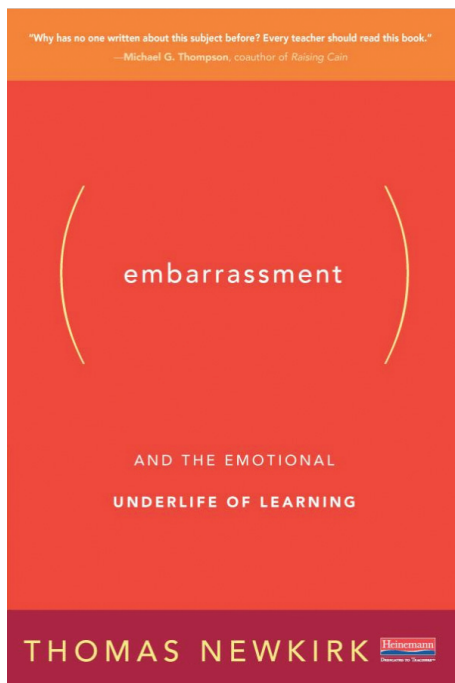


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Embarrassment and the Emotional Underlife of Learning

by Thomas Newkirk

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This is a much-needed examination of how embarrassment, shame and self-perception affects learning at all levels.

A repeated goal in education is to create safe learning spaces where students can feel comfortable enough to take risks necessary for growth. Unfortunately, we can't always battle the voices in our students' heads that are scientifically proven to cling to negative experiences over the positive. Thomas Newkirk's acknowledgement "that embarrassment is not only a true enemy of learning but of so many other actions we could take to better ourselves" (p.29) reinforces this fact. Reading his book to discover how we can "rearrange some things in our own head so that we can be more generous towards ourselves" (p. 30) is an important life lesson. Imagine what we could achieve if we believed we had the power to change our, often negative, self-perception.

Stories of the effects of embarrassment and how to overcome them are strewn throughout this book, but the power of the read comes from the teaching methods provided to help us, as teachers, overcome the limiting effects of embarrassment and shame. Thomas Newkirk has dedicated chapters to examine specific strategies to support students in math, reading and writing. He gives specific accountable talk structures to help students clarify their thinking, take in other ideas and provide the time and space to think and reflect

giving our students the confidence to participate fully in the learning process.

Another powerful chapter is dedicated to sport. Athletics bring great successes, but also public failure. How do coaches and athletes use sports psychology to overcome those moments and move on? How can those methods support us in the classroom?

This book also connects us to many popular theories and theorists floating through education. You'll see reference to Carol Dweck's grit, perseverance and growth-mindset as well as Jo Boaler's ideas of how mistakes grow your brain. Although not directly mentioned, there also are many references to the gift of failure which you can explore in Jessica Lahey's book of the same title.

If you are looking to support your students' growth at the core level and want to build skills to help students become their own "internal cheerleader" and balance out their limiting "internal critic," (p.96) look no further than Thomas Newkirk's well-researched book filled with engaging stories from many voices to illustrate his point. ■