

ALL WE NEED IS LOVE TO BE BETTER TEACHERS

By Maria Estela Ribeiro Jardim Rondon

How can we be better teachers if we do not have love? Love for ourselves, for others for our job? Treating our students with love makes a difference, opening a channel of understanding and empathy. When you listen to them, they feel valued and accepted, and what you teach becomes more relatable. Therefore, learning is more effective.

Listening to our students is very important. Fernando is a sixteen-year-old teenager who tells me his anecdotes. This gives the student opportunity to feel acknowledged. This connection by affection and sympathy enhances learning. In one of his conversations, he said everybody needed *attention*.

Give your student the benefit of the doubt. A five-year-old boy named Benny misbehaved and swore in the classroom. For this reason, he was always called into the headteacher's office. Besides this, he had an assistant teacher to take care of him. I observed him carefully and one day I wrote only good things about him in his class diary to be signed by his parents. There was silence in the classroom and the little boy cried because he was afraid. I told him what it was written there. I gave him a chance to start again not to be what people told him he was. He changed his behavior from that day on. By outlining the positive in his behavior he had the chance to look at himself from that perspective and changed. When we act out of love instead of fear, all of us benefit from it, the teacher and the student.

J.K. Rowling, the creator of Harry Potter, was an English teacher in Portugal too. In her Commencement Address at Harvard University 2008 she said '...humans can learn and understand without having experienced. They can think themselves into other people's place. Daniel, another student at the age of five, had a tantrum in the middle of a class because her mum had not sent a picture of his family for a class project as it was requested. All the other students had a picture. I said he could draw his family and when he finished, I called him first to talk about his family.

Anita Moorjani, the writer of 'Dying to be me!' in her testimony of 2006 said: '...The most important thing is Love...Love keeps you safe....Love yourself, get to know who you are and be yourself...Miguel, a twelve-year-old student has social cognition problems. He has a speech therapist, a psychiatrist and a psychologist. However, he felt accepted, loved and safe in a singing club. He sang 'All we need is love by Beatles among other songs with his colleagues. It is incredible to see how happy he is. He found himself.

I could not agree more with J.K. Rowling when she said in her speech '....we do not need magic to change the world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already. We have the power to imagine better...' I also think through empathy we can bring all our love to the classroom to engage our students and help create better stories. If more of us are together, we can change the world.