

CATHOLIC TEACHERS' **SAFER SPACES SERIES**

Moral Elements of Care

In addition to legal requirements for teachers in the province of Ontario (see Catholic Teachers' **Safer Spaces Series: Safer Spaces? Braver Space? – Our Collective Responsibility** for further detail), renowned educational theorist and advocate Joan Tronto suggests that we need to consider and practice ethical behaviour or a morale element of care, defining care as:

“An activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web.”

The moral elements of care as defined by Tronto include:

Attentiveness (*caring about*): noticing unmet needs, suspending one's own judgements, and being able to see the world from the perspective of the one in need.

Responsibility (*caring for*): taking on the burden of responding to this need.

Competence (*care giving*): being competent to care, which is a technical, moral, and political issue.

Responsiveness (*care receiving*): listening to the response of the person/group that was cared for, sometimes resulting in new unmet needs.

Solidarity (*caring with*): taking collective responsibility – to think of citizens as both receivers and givers of care, and to think seriously about the nature of caring needs in society.



Reflection Questions

Using the definitions noted above, reflect upon how you are implementing these as a Catholic teacher.

Attentiveness (*caring about*)

- When have you wished someone would notice an unmet need? When have you noticed one?
- Whose perspective in your classroom, school, and/or board, do you have difficulty seeing?

Responsibility (*caring for*)

- When has someone taken on the burden of responding to your needs? When have you done this for others?
- How do you respond to the needs of your students? How do you attend to your own needs?

Competence (*care giving*)

- How have you developed your understanding of the needs of others? Do you know what to do to support your learners?
- What professional development do you need to provide competent care for your students regardless of identity?
- Consider the identities protected in **Ontario's Human Rights Code**. Do you know what best practices for care are?

Responsiveness (*care receiving*)

- Do you feel heard by those who should care for you?
- Do you listen attentively to others, or simply wait for silence to fill the space?
- How could you promote an ethics of listening in your classroom and in your world?

Solidarity (*caring with*)

- How have you developed a sense of solidarity with people who might be very different from you? What impact has this had on your practice as a teacher? A parent? A friend? A colleague?
- What additional steps need to be taken?

» Additional Resources

See other resources in the Catholic Teachers' Safer Spaces Series, including:

- [Reflection Tool - Moral Elements of Care and Allyship](#)
- [Intent vs. Impact](#)
- [Allyship & Beyond](#)

See other resources in the Catholic Teachers' Mental Health and Wellness Series, including:

- [Understanding Mental Illness](#)
- [Distinguishing Mental Health from Mental Illness](#)
- [Strategies to Promote Mental Health and Wellness](#)