

Classroom Shame Resilience Strategies

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PURPOSE

This job aid provides instructional strategies that support shame resilience in the classroom. The strategies are organized into a rubric designed for instructor self-assessment and reflection.

BACKGROUND

The literature on shame and shame resilience spans multiple disciplines. While psychologists and social workers have long studied shame and its effects on people in mental health contexts, education has more recently begun to explore shame as a barrier to learning.

Protective factors for students include emotionally safe and inclusive learning environments. Post-secondary classrooms provide opportunities for learners to engage in critical thinking and self-reflection, while developing essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These experiences can be transformative, as students explore their identities and contributions to knowledge and society.

HOW TO USE THIS RUBRIC

The Shame Resilience Rubric is based on five pillars:

- Connection
- Feedback
- Design
- Developing Empathy
- Psychological Safety

Each pillar includes evidence-based strategies to help instructors create learning environments that reduce the negative impacts of shame and foster resilience.

Instructors can use the rubric to:

- Identify shame-resilient strategies in their teaching
- Reflect on current practices
- Plan intentional changes to better support students.

Grading Implications and Recommendations

Use the rubric to total your score across the five pillars (each scored from 0–10):

- 0–24: Not meeting basic standards for shame resilience; likely negative impacts on student well-being, retention, and learning.
- 25–37: Approaching basic standards; some practices in place, but significant improvement is needed.
- 38–49: Meeting basic standards; positive signs of shame-resilient practices, though some areas may require development.
- 50: Fully meeting standards; practices support student resilience, retention, and learning through inclusive and intentional design.


Shame Resilient Classroom Rubric (Level 1)

Outcome	Excellent (10)	Good (7)	Needs Improvement (5)	Unacceptable (0)
Connection	The course is purposefully designed to build community. Activities, assessments, and content center students and scaffold relationships. Student voice and agency are supported and celebrated.	The course includes community-building activities and encourages participation. Student voice is permitted but not always central.	Course includes occasional peer interaction but is primarily instructor-centered. Student voice is inconsistently supported.	Course is lecture-focused with no peer interaction. Student voice is absent or discouraged.
Developing Empathy	Help-seeking is encouraged with visible support (office hours, contact info, community resources). Adult learning principles and peer learning are	Help-seeking is supported and peer learning is encouraged. Community and campus support information is provided.	Some support is present, but lacks consistency. Peer learning is minimal. Community/campus support not referenced.	Support systems and peer learning are absent. No reference to campus or community services.

	integrated. Student strengths and prior experiences are valued.			
Feedback	Feedback aligns with course objectives, avoids coded language, and reflects bias-aware practices. Materials and communication are equitable and transparent.	Feedback is clear and objective-focused. Bias-aware practices are not evident but language is respectful.	Feedback is vague or inconsistent. Limited effort to avoid bias or coded language.	Feedback is unclear or harmful. Coded language and bias are evident in materials or communication.
Psychological Safety	Trauma-informed practices are applied. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is visible. Students see themselves reflected in course design. Classroom management is co-created with clear, respectful boundaries.	Trauma-informed practices and UDL are evident. Students are encouraged to participate. Boundaries and expectations are instructor-led but clear.	Trauma-informed practices and UDL are inconsistent or underdeveloped. Students may not feel represented. Expectations are vague.	Course lacks trauma-informed or inclusive practices. Boundaries and expectations are unclear or intrusive.
Design	Assignments are scaffolded with transparent rubrics. Due dates are clear. Flexible policies (e.g., grace days, late passes) are in place.	Assignments are scaffolded and have clear rubrics. Policies are fixed with no flexibility.	Assignments and expectations are unclear or sporadic. No flexibility in policy.	Assignments are unclear or inconsistent. No rubrics or flexibility.

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