

What you pay attention to grows:
Using emergent strategy to foster
belonging in library classrooms

LOEX Fall Focus 2025



Agenda

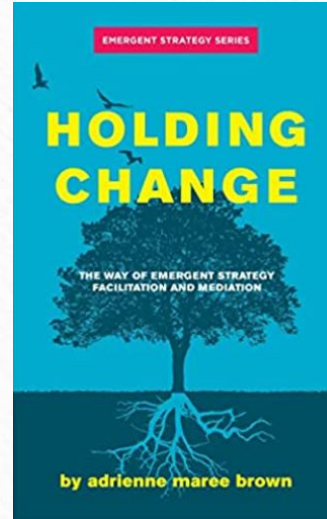
- 01 — Introduction to emergent strategy - Leah
Reflect on its presence in your own classroom
- 02 — What you pay attention to grows - Lynn
Story from Lynn's classroom and her intentional adaptations
- 03 — Benefits & Advice for librarian teachers - Hazel
Stories from librarians finding joy with emergent strategy
- 04 — Q&A and audience sharing
Reflect, share, ask questions



adrienne maree brown's emergent strategy



brown, a. m. (2017). *Emergent strategy: Shaping change, changing worlds*. AK Press.



brown, a. m. (2021). *Holding change, The way of emergent strategy facilitation and mediation*. AK Press.

emergent strategy is...

feminist, afrofuturist exploration of human responses to change
and imagining socially just futures and a better world

inspired by Octavia Butler's fiction, the work of activists such as
Grace Lee Boggs, the Tao Te Ching, and the natural world

an imagining of the possibilities of connection-making



emergent strategy is...

“Ways for humans to practice being in right relationship to our home and each other, to practice complexity, and grow a compelling future together through relatively simple interactions.”



emergent strategy principles



Small is good, small is all.
(the large is a reflection of
the small)



Change is constant.
(be like water)



There is always enough
time for the right work.



There is a conversation in the
room that only these people at
this moment can have. Find it.



Never a failure, always a
lesson.



Trust the people. (If you
trust them, they
become trustworthy)



Move at the speed of trust:
focus on critical connections
more than critical mass



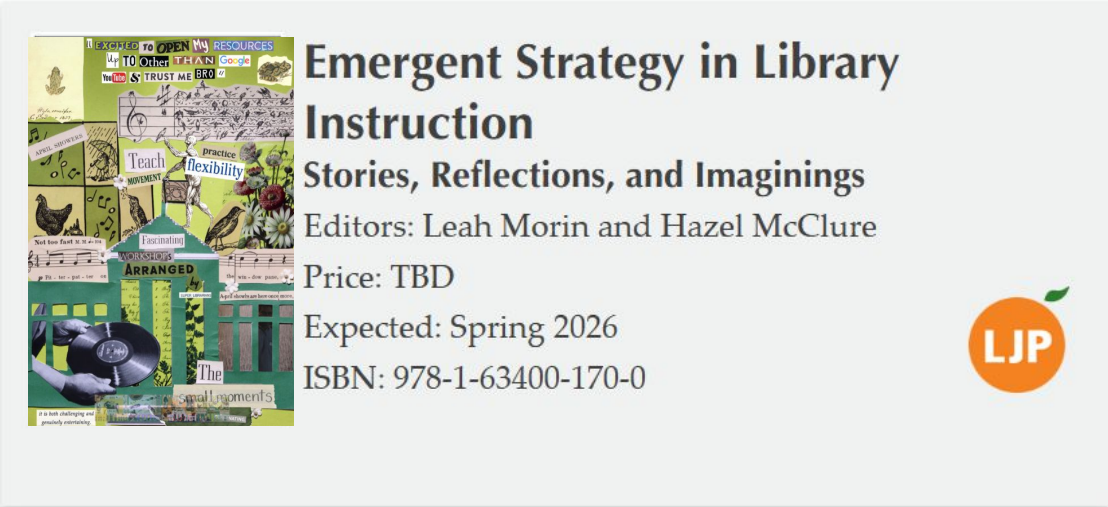
Less prep, more
presence.



What you pay attention to
grows.



A vertical floral pattern featuring a variety of flowers and foliage. The design includes large pink flowers with dark centers, smaller orange flowers, and clusters of small blue flowers. The leaves are in shades of green and yellow, creating a vibrant and naturalistic look. The pattern is set against a plain white background.



ISBN: 978-1-63400-170-0



A vertical watercolor floral border on the left side of the page, featuring pink, orange, and blue flowers with green leaves.

our book

Stories

Scholarly writing

Lesson plans

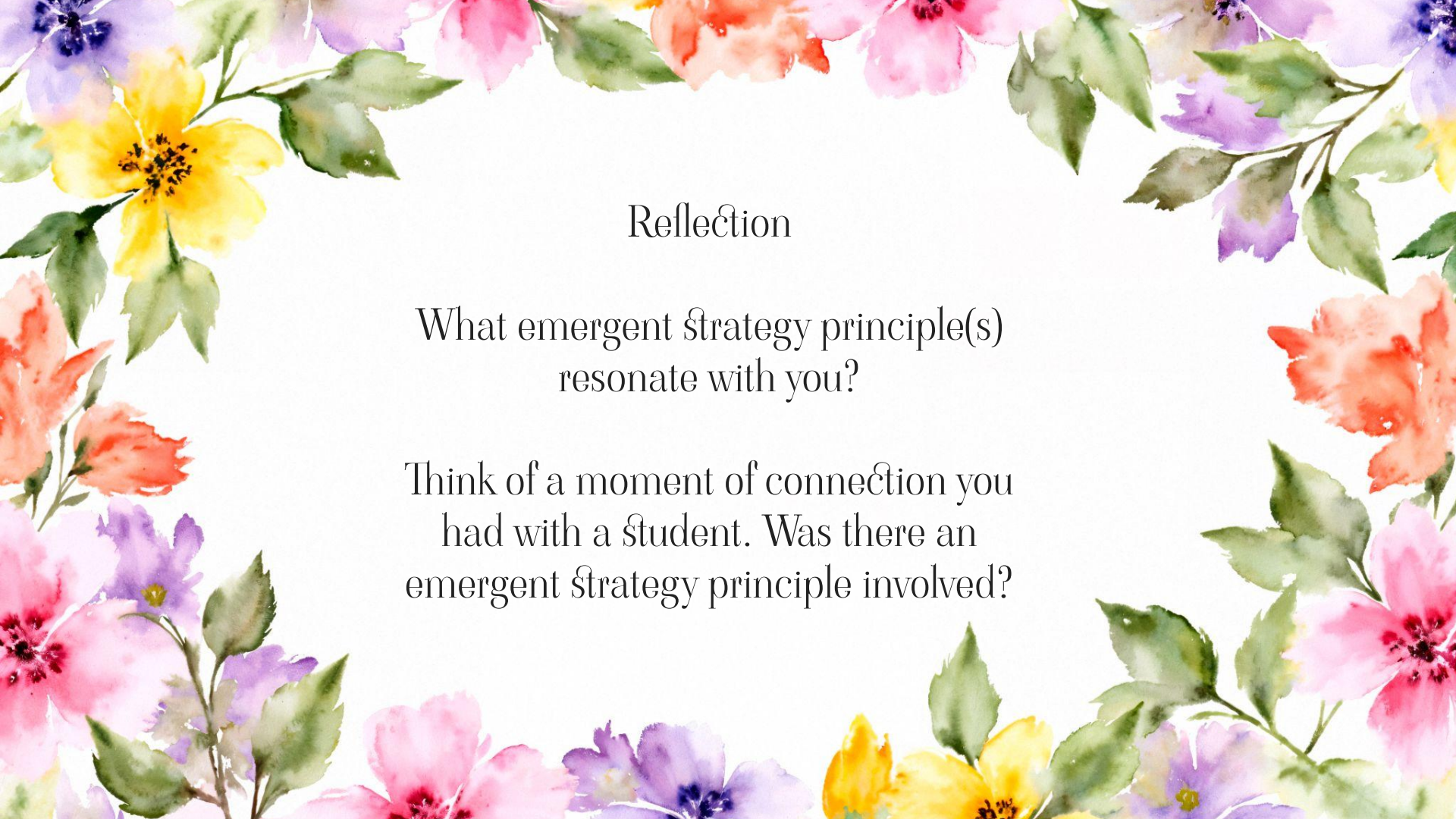
Conversation transcripts

Reflective writing/journal entries

Poetry

Artwork/Student artwork

Doodles

A decorative border of watercolor flowers in shades of purple, pink, yellow, and orange, with green leaves, framing the central text.

Reflection

What emergent strategy principle(s)
resonate with you?

Think of a moment of connection you
had with a student. Was there an
emergent strategy principle involved?

Reflection: think of a moment of connection you had with a student. Was there an emergent strategy principle involved?



Small is good, small is all.
(the large is a reflection of
the small)



Change is constant.
(be like water)



There is always enough
time for the right work.



There is a conversation in the
room that only these people at
this moment can have. Find it.



Never a failure, always a
lesson.



Trust the people. (If you
trust them, they
become trustworthy)



Move at the speed of trust:
focus on critical connections
more than critical mass



Less prep, more
presence.



What you pay attention to
grows.



Less prep, more presence +

Reflections from a Session Long Ago -
A Transformative Teaching Moment

What You Pay Attention to Grows





*T*ransformative Teaching Moments - Creating a Sense of Belonging Using Emergent Strategy

“Information literacy should begin and end with student concerns, even if it means teasing them out through time-consuming discussions.

Students learn research better within meaningful contexts. In discussions with instructors about class research topics, we should raise this issue, making every effort to focus on topics that mean something to students.

Of course, we cannot identify those issues without talking and listening to them.” (Ward, 2001, 924)

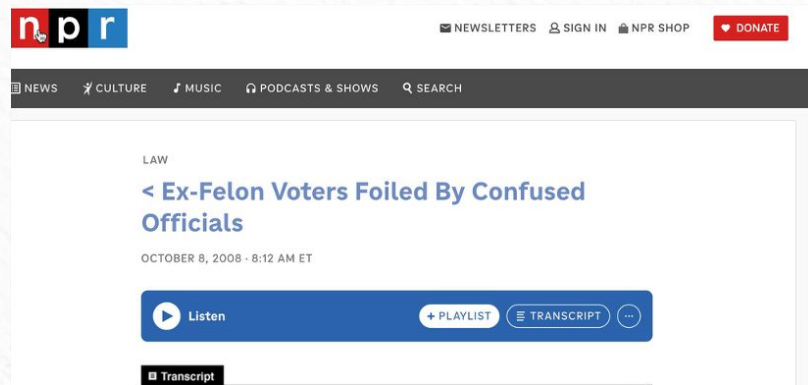
My Transformative Teaching Experience (October 8, 2008)

Shifted my goals for one-shot instruction to focus on:

- student engagement,
- social justice exploration
- creating space for critical thinking

Key theoretical concepts/intentional applications & adaptations

- Dane Ward's philosophy
- Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy
- connecting to Emergent Strategy



We, as instruction librarians, can relate to approaching our classrooms and learning *in medias res*.

- One Shot Instruction
- Limited access to instructional details working with just a prompt or a syllabus
- Joining a class mid-stream & working with only partial knowledge about what is going on in the class (hoping discussion encouraged, voices valued etc.)

IN MEDIAS RES



Intentional adaptations like the adoption of Emergent Strategy can help create a sense of belonging and build connections amongst students and to us



How we choose to embrace the one-shot dynamic when entering a class “already in progress” can create a sense of belonging by

Being Flexible

Abandoning rigid outlines solely allows librarians to introduce thought provoking topics/issues that may engage students to learn to search for information

Encouraging Student Centered Discussion & Listening

Fostering critical thinking skills and querying real world issues/injustices helps students identify topics/patterns found in primary & secondary sources

Locating a Shared Experience or Reaction to Current Events/Issues/Topics

These experiences, and our reactions to them (students & librarian), connect us and underscore our common human bond.

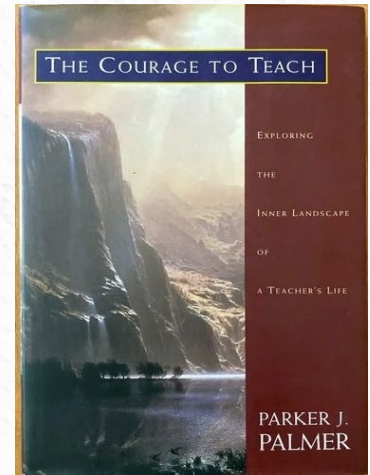
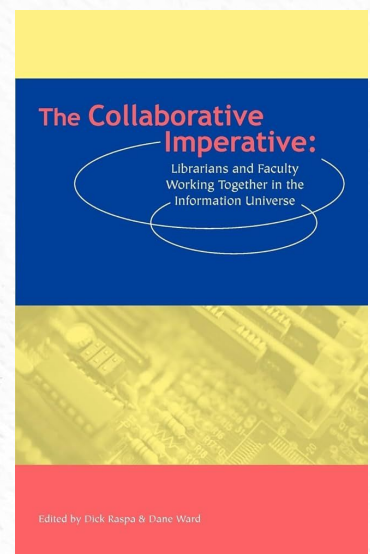
Theoretical Underpinnings & Additional Adaptations in the Classroom

Dane Ward & The Power of Building Relationships

- Teaching as a collaborative relationship
- Students as co-creators of knowledge
- Focus on inquiry, not just content delivery

Parker Palmer

- Creating a "**community of truth**" in the classroom
- Emphasizes creating connection between teachers, students, and subject matter
- Promotes relational & communal learning experience focused on authenticity and shared inquiry
- "Truth is an eternal conversation about things that matter, conducted with passion and discipline" (Palmer, 106).



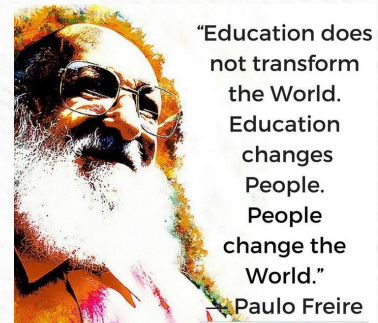
Influence of Paulo Freire: Applications in the One-Shot

Shifting the librarian's role to facilitator, not authority
(creating a sense of belonging/trust)

- Banking model vs. problem-posing education
- Dialogue and critical consciousness
- Education as a practice of freedom

Tying into constructivist pedagogy—
guide on the side vs. sage on the stage

King, Alison. "From sage on the stage to guide on the side." *College teaching* 41, no. 1 (1993): 30-35.



Current Adaptation that Create Belonging & Connections

Incremental Small Changes to Improving Teaching & Connection

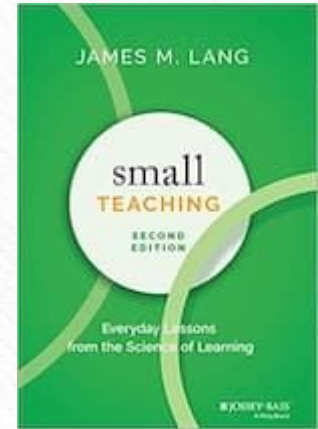
“Small is good, small is all” (adrienne maree brown, 41)

Valuing of students’ existing knowledge & thoughts

“Asking them to use existing knowledge to struggle with material before we teach it can provide a robust foundation for deeper learning” (Lang, 20)

“Be present as the guide & expert who can provide feedback on their discoveries” (Lang, 109)

Intentional Adaptations: lead to small patterns creating big change





Why Emergent Strategy Adaptations Matter in One-Shot Sessions

- Known limitations of the one-shot model
- Potential to still inspire critical inquiry and transformation
- Importance of framing one-shot sessions as a beginning of exploration – iterative thinking – the start of a journey
- Encourages student & librarian discussions that emphasize presence and shared experience to build trust & sense of belonging
- Fosters small activities & discussions which deepen thinking
- Uses inquiry prompts that build on students' lived experiences
- Encourages collaborative reflection on current news/media/information – a focus on the present
- Helps develop pattern recognition within information sources

Using One-Shot Time to Critically Explore Sources in Real-time

Using primary & secondary sources to support student centered inquiry provides critical evaluation examples rooted in justice:

- Whose voice is centered or silenced?
- What assumptions are present?
- What power dynamics are at play?

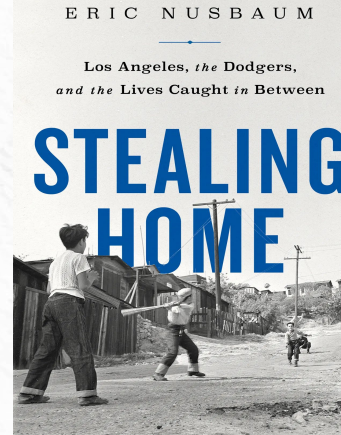
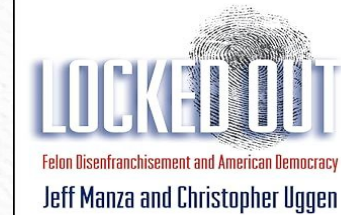
The example topic on that Oct 8, 2008 morning became:

felony disenfranchisement

Since then I have used topics like

eminent domain in Los Angeles (Dodger Stadium Chavez Ravine)

Sparks discussions that can only happen in that room with these students: **how and why is are these issues/topics still happening in society.**





Connecting Topic Exploration/Research to Social Justice & Shared Lived Experiences

- Moving from isolated topic facts to systemic information analysis:
Example: Climate injustice → historical industrial development → policy and environmental racism
(topics used: Flint, Michigan water/uranium mining Navajo)
- How small student driven investigations/start of class research dive can spark discussions & uncover deeper thoughts
- Encouraging student questions/inquiry:
"Why does this issue exist?"
"Who benefits/ed?"
"What's missing?"

The teachings of Octavia Butler – reflections on shared experience for knowledge & survival & growth



Emergent Strategy Supports Teaching Librarians

Adaptation: allows for intentionally adjusting to constant change (live student input vs canned) focus on purpose/student input

Relationality: allows introduction of complex ideas and patterns to show how they arise from small, interconnected interactions and relationships/sources.

Helps students see: patterns and connections in their ideas, within topics, sources, and how to relate research questions to real world issues and problems (past & present)

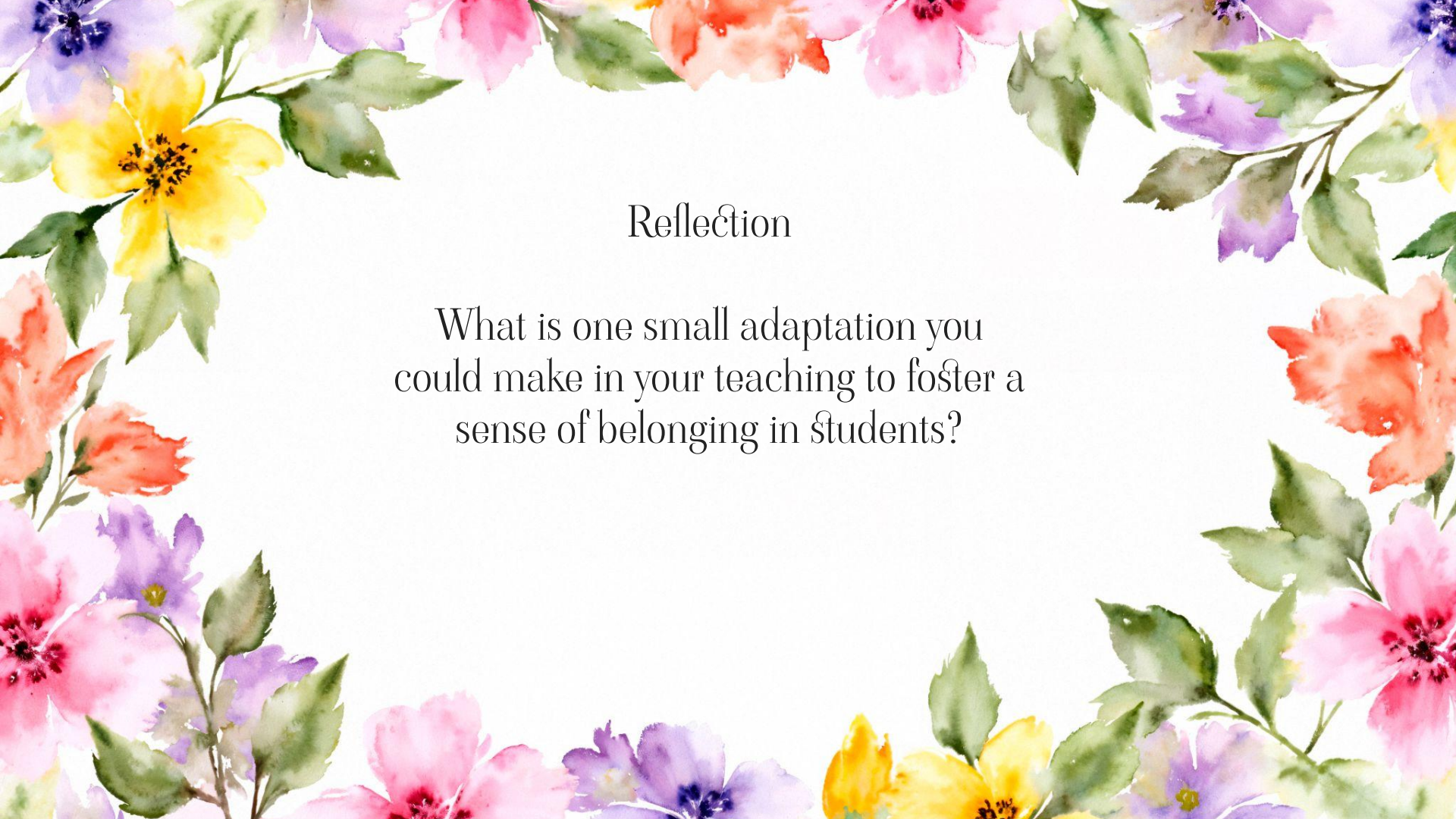
Librarian Self-Care

“The frenetic pace of doing, doing, doing, without being present with each other and the season we are in, what is happening around us, is unnatural and counter to life” (Salgado, 2022 as cited by adrienne maree brown).

A decorative vertical border on the left side of the slide, featuring watercolor-style illustrations of pink, orange, and blue flowers with green leaves.

“How we are at the small scale is how we are at the large scale”

(Brown, 2017, 52).

A decorative border of watercolor flowers in shades of yellow, pink, purple, and orange, with green leaves, framing the central text.

Reflection

What is one small adaptation you could make in your teaching to foster a sense of belonging in students?

benefits of emergent strategy for librarians

Facilitates Connection (to colleagues,
students, & purpose)

Helps you be the Librarian you've needed

Helps focus your attention on priorities

Helps Avoid Burnout



... and some advice

1. reflect



"Growing Pains: Navigating Library Instruction Through Reflective Journaling" by Brianna Chatmon

"Care-full Pedagogy: Cultivating Trauma-Sensitive Connections in the Information Literacy Classroom" by Mary Ruge

"Being a Lamppost on Students' Information Literacy Journey" by Kelly Williams



2. attend to what matters - even if (especially if?) it's small

"Small is All Library Moments" by Leah Morin

"Hi, Friend: Small Changes to Impact Student Belonging" by
Sharell Walker

"Hard to Translate" by Lacey Brooks-Canales

"Small is All: Teaching D.I.Y. Feminism in Archives" by
Bernadette Floresca and Chloe Raub



3. find, build, & nurture community & connection



"Oak Trees: Experiences and Reflections on Emergent Strategy" by Mai Lu, Arvind Kang, Samantha Kruger, and Reece Steinberg

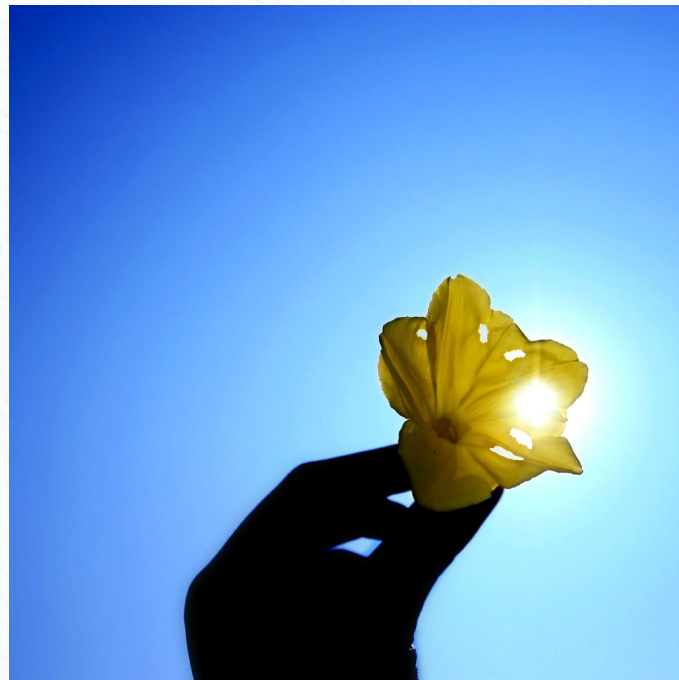
"Writing in the Commons: Emergent Strategies to Facilitate Public Library Writing Groups" by Ery Caswell



4. *embrace anti-perfectionism*

"Less Plan, More Discussion: Rethinking Lesson Preparation to Focus on the Conversation in the Room" by Heather Buchansky

"Living Up to Emergent Strategy" by Jennifer Thom Hadley



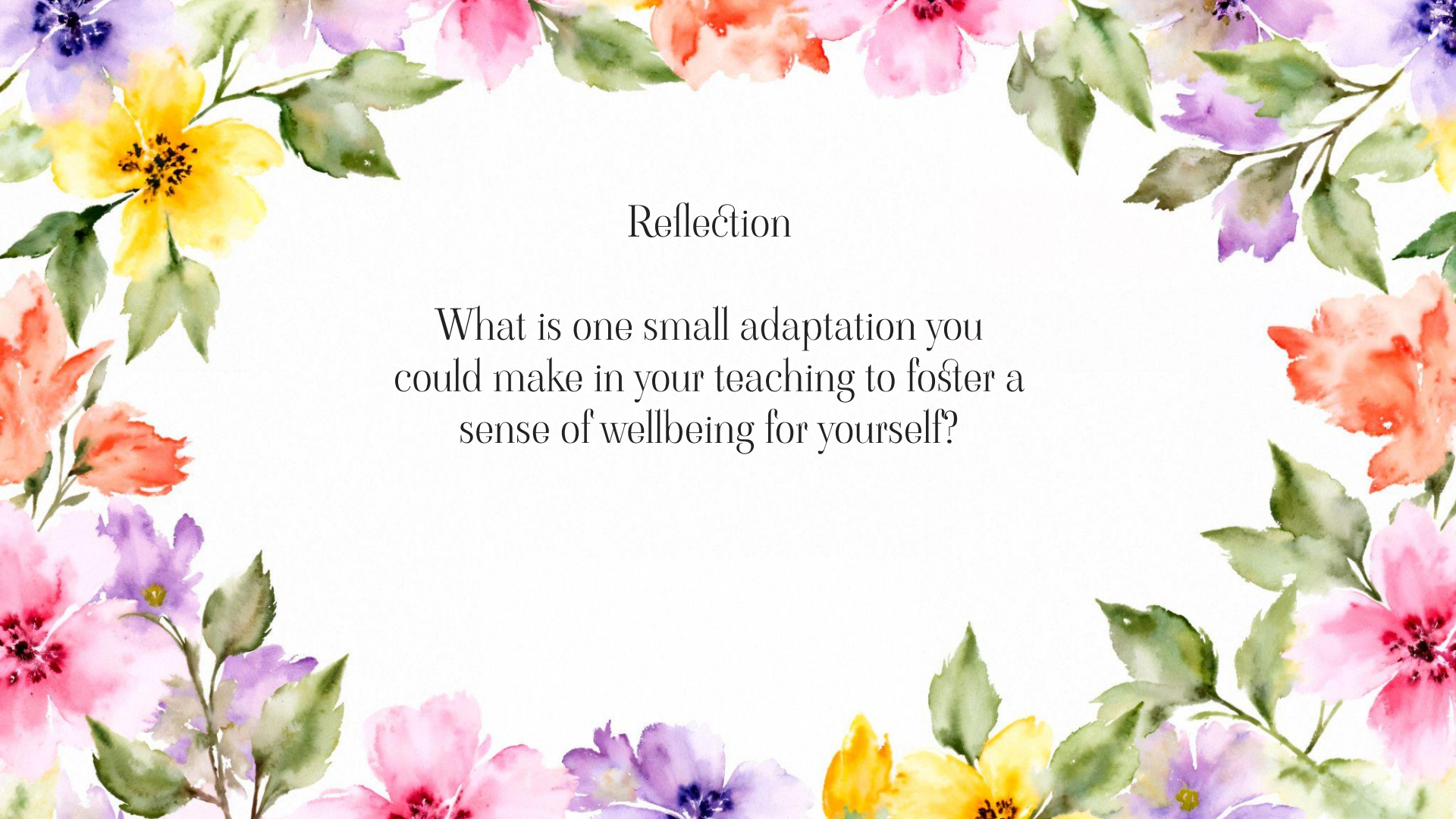
"Perfectly Imperfect" by Bùi Linh Ngân

finally, 5. find & set up conditions for joy

"Students on the Mic: Active Engagement in Podcast Composition Instruction" by Charlie Bennet

"Here For It All: Creating Pre-Class Rituals to Embrace the Multiverse Classroom" by Samantha Minnis





Reflection

What is one small adaptation you could make in your teaching to foster a sense of wellbeing for yourself?

Thanks

Do you have any questions?

Leah Morin

Michigan State University

Information Literacy
Librarian

Hazel McClure

Grand Valley State University

Head of Research,
Instruction, and Outreach

Lynn Lampert

California State University
Northridge

Coordinator of Library
Instruction & Information
Literacy

CREDITS: This presentation template was created by **Slidesgo**,
and includes icons, infographics & images by **Freepik**

PHOTO CREDITS: “Perfectly Imperfect” by Bùi Linh Ngân. Other
photos by Hazel McClure,

