

Brion-Meisels Clip 6 Transcript

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: I'm going to share because you all have to deal with this.

AUDIENCE: Thanks so much.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: I'll start. And then, if someone else wants to, they can. So this happened to me recently. It has happened to me a lot as a teacher where I've been trying to make decisions about cost-benefit analysis. So is this the moment when I want to risk a relationship with another adult, basically, over x? But it hadn't happened to me as a researcher until recently. And recently, something happened where I really felt like the school had done something that was wrong.

And I had to make a decision about whether or not I was going to use my voice, use my positionality as the Harvard person to actually try to do something about it. And it was a really hard moment of like, OK, if I do this, I could be giving up the potential to do this work ever again. Yeah. But if I don't do it, what is the message that that sends to the young person who was affected by the decision that was being made?

So that was one that happened to me recently. I did do it, but I did it in kind of a maybe not as forceful way as I should have. And I still am wondering about whether I should have gone-- I did it in a very, I want to partner with you.

AUDIENCE: District?

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: Oh, yeah. Like district. And I don't know that that was the right decision because I'm not sure anything will come of what I did.

AUDIENCE: Like it wasn't enough.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: Yeah. Right. So I don't know if other people have had any similar experiences or any other kinds of things.

AUDIENCE: I ran a creative arts program in Guatemala for a couple of years and had like a really hard time with the administration just like pushing for arts as an important part of development and learning. And there were some high school students that were coming out as gay and the administration's response was very much along the lines of like, we can save you, you'll be OK.

AUDIENCE: Yikes.

AUDIENCE: And I was not out at work in that job, and that was something that in that moment, I tried to be supportive individually to each student but didn't bring my own identity into it because I think I knew at the time that if my identity was brought into that, that it was going to completely tank my ability to push this program forward.

But that's something that stuck with me for a very long time of like, did I do enough to support those young people? And I'm 31 years old and coming here to Harvard, it's the first time that I've had like teachers who are openly out in the classroom.