

Breaking the Cocoon

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I am a beauty parlour instructor at a vocational training center. I have taught many students over the years. This story is about a lady who had been a housewife all her life. It was out of necessity that she had now stepped out of the safety of her house to teach herself a useful skill. Tasneem was particularly shy and nervous, unlike other women, none of whom fear me as a teacher.

Tasneem was afraid to speak with me, her hands would tremble if she was practicing a task and I stood by watching. I knew that the other girls would easily ask me if they had trouble understanding something, but Tasneem was so hesitant to speak that she wouldn't ask me or any of the other members of the class.

Practice and a little more attention. That was my solution. I would stand by her and give her practice in the skills we were learning. If I felt she wasn't doing something right, I would hold her hand and guide it to show her how to hold hair while cutting it or how to tilt and hold a hair dryer. Once she started to relax she told me that she had been afraid of me! She also told me how this course was something that she did want to do but her necessity was her main motivation.

To help her overcome her fear, I involved Tasneem in different activities such as decorating the class. I asked her to be the group leader when we did group work. As the leader, she had a chance to have more interaction with me. Thus the fear factor slowly vanished.

This incident made me realize that a teacher's job is not just to come and teach; no matter what the age of the students and what the content of the teaching is, a teacher has a psychological bond with the students that must be honoured.

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