



# Taking the temperature of the room: fostering online connections by connecting to students' mood through images

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Students need to feel connected to a class and to the material to learn effectively. This year, I started using mood pictures to start off classes online to recognize students' emotional states and my own, as part of what we bring to learning each day.

## CHALLENGES IN ONLINE LEARNING

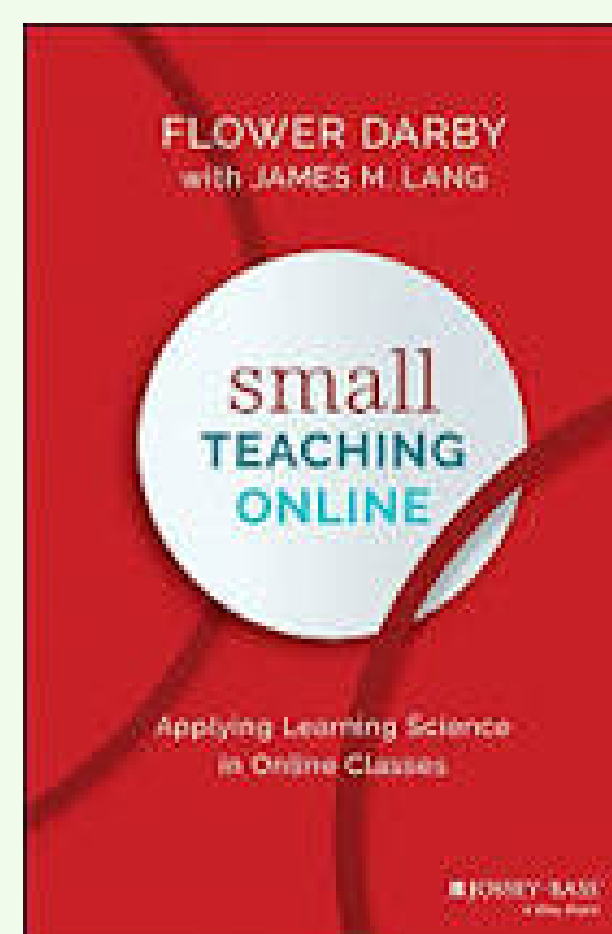
- Students feel disconnected, and so do instructors
- Building community is more challenging in an online context, even with synchronous sessions
- Traditional science teaching does not focus on social presence, which is one of three types of present necessary for having a strong community of inquiry
- The pandemic has left students and instructors feeling more stressed and disconnected

## SETTING:



- I teach undergraduate major and nonmajors courses, and graduate course
- My class sizes range ranging from 9 to 160 students
- Most of my classes were taught online this year

## INSPIRATION:



During the Flower Darby webinar in August, she discussed social presence in the classroom as a key way to connect students to the class community

One technique she demonstrated was using photographs and asking students to identify which best fit their mood

## INTERVENTION

- Start class with six images (usually plants) connected with various emotions. Changed images each class if possible.
- Use Zoom poll to see which image students identified with
- Ask students to comment in the chat window about why (and I usually wrote in the chat window as well)
- Process results and also share with them what I picked
- Took about 2 minutes



Which picture do you most identify with today?

## Some of the pictures were also related to course content!

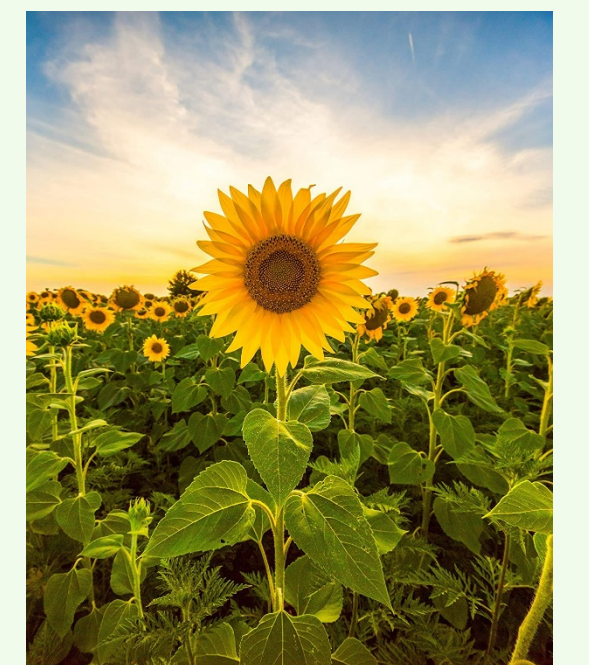
After using them for their emotional component, we were also able to relate them to learning objectives of the course:

- Characteristics of life
- Biomes
- Major plant groups, linking to plant evolutionary trends
- Ohio native plants
- Seasonality and phenology
- Plant growth patterns (primary and secondary)
- Animal diversity

## STUDENT REACTIONS:

In every class, some students chose resilient pictures, like plants growing through obstacles or hanging on.

Reactions were similar with UG and graduate students, and the larger class was most enthusiastic about this



## Student chats:

- I relate to the top left plant. A little tired but pushing through
- being strangled by stress
- bottom left because I know I'm strong enough to handle what's on my plate but I still feel like I'm reaching everywhere
- I feel like tree E--My structure, aka the tree, is being overwhelmed by a vine (the semester)
- I chose C with being optimistic and trying to grow toward the sunlight
- B because I'm trying to figure things out, but will do better in the end hopefully
- E. Always a lot going on in life, so I'm always going in heaps of different directions.
- E because I'm built different
- Love sun flowers. My last name means sunshine in Arabic so I've always connected with sunflowers :)
- D - branching out, going thru a career change

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Look for more connections between images and course content
- Keep chat going when we get back to F2F! Students also used chat extensively for content that related to their lives and experiences
- Images from Amazon, [RevelWallpapers](#), Wikipedia, Matt Armstrong, Gardener's supply and DeBaco University