



New Mexico Boys and Girls Ranches

CORRAL

Summer 2020 Emotional Weather

By Heath Kull

"I've come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or dehumanized." - Haim Ginott

The Emotional Weather That We Create

I have used this quote repeatedly and consistently while working with our staff to help kids who come to The Ranches. This awareness has led us to the point where we are having to always be aware of the weather that we create for the kids that we serve and care for.

While our quiet little oasis in the New Mexico desert is pretty easy to navigate, our societal weather is a bit more difficult to traverse. We are all a part of society, but it can begin to feel that we don't have much impact on the emotional weather for those around us. For me, my focus is usually on my kids and the kids and staff of The Ranches. Those kids, however, will soon be members of the broader society and have to deal with both the weather that they create and the weather of others. I have noticed recently that we have, as a society, begun to quietly compete with each other regarding diagnosing other's issues and identifying the negative behaviors of other segments

of the population. It is as if we want to prove that we can spot the "problem people" first and, in doing so, prevent ourselves from looking stupid when those people turn out to be undeserving of whatever praise or position, they hold in our society.

Imagine, for a second, if Jesus had been like us and said, "I am sorry 'woman at the well' but you are not worthy because of your political beliefs, your previous comments, your immature former beliefs and don't even get me started on your social media posts. Your past prevents any future with me."

Fortunately – for all of us – Christ never took our approach. He, instead, asked us to take his. We are to turn the other cheek, be slow to anger, treat others as we wish to be treated and be willing to forgive quickly and completely...even when it is difficult. I have observed as many are now guilty of trying to determine which people are deserving of grace, forgiveness, second chances and, most importantly, of love. This is, unfortunately, all based on the behaviors that we can see and the judgments and diagnosis we so quickly make.

In light of the current events in our country, how do you think that people reach the point that they no longer see those with different beliefs as having any value? Do you think it may have started with thinking that people with different views and beliefs are undeserving of the benefit of the doubt, grace, forgiveness and love?

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The Ranches Alumni

HOPE...

Knowing that your efforts
and dreams will find each
other.

- Micah C.

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Rekindling HOPE for At Risk Youth - Since 1944



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Heath Kull
President

Given the significant coverage and plethora of information related to world events that can, most of the time, feel overwhelming, I feel no need to rehash those events here. Suffice it to say that Rekindling Hope in At Risk Youth is particularly challenging right now. Being in a position to explain current events to the kids is particularly challenging considering that they aren't glued to phones or TVs and have limited exposure to the 24/7 news coverage. We do our best, but there are an unlimited number of proverbial land mines to navigate in an attempt to convey accurate information without becoming an agendized voice that may be seen as leaning towards indoctrination. I simply work every day to do my best and pray that the Lord gives me the words.

If I were to proclaim that, "The Ranches' Kids Matter; They are Important," I have no doubt that "All Kid's Matter; They are All Important!" would be the retort from many. While I can agree with both sentiments, I spend a whole lot more of my time with kids at The Ranches than I do other kids...except for my own. My kids are not, and have never been, "Ranch kids," and they do indeed matter a great deal to me. Because of Lani's and my commitment to each other and our combined hard work, I can worry about and focus temporarily on the kids at The Ranches while also knowing my kids have had a supportive two parent home for most of the days of their lives. In truth, I manage my time, focus and attention every day and can prioritize and reprioritize "on the fly" as most everyone can.

The sad truth is that for many of the kids at The Ranches, they feel that their life never has really mattered to anyone and when they hear that their life finally matters to someone, they can lose all sense of boundaries and self control and fall into the trap of thinking that the years of their life not mattering means that, now that they matter to someone, they should matter to that person or group of people more than anyone else ever has. When this occurs, we have to maintain our boundaries and remind kids that they are important, they are important to us and that we can have more than one person, or even more than one group of people, in our lives that are important to us. IT is tricky and very personal, but this is the work.

Biblically, I am often reminded of the words in the book of Luke Chapter 15

¹Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

³ Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴ "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' ⁷ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

So many times, the kids at The Ranches have felt like the one and feel disconnected from the ninety-nine. As an organization, we are focused on the lonely, disconnected and seemingly forgotten ones. When we do seek them out and work to help them understand their importance, the most important step is the last one; reconnecting them to the ninety-nine so that the herd - or family - is again complete.

As a society and as a country, we are being asked how we want to treat and deal with the ones who feel that they have been separated and left behind from the herd. Are we dedicated to ninety-nine or the one? Or, are we like most who take Christ seriously in our lives and dedicated to the safety and security of the ninety-nine while we work hard to identify, find, help and heal the one...even if that one is different in almost every way.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "HK" or similar initials.

Heath Kull - President
heathk@theranches.org





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At what age do you think that people were when they began to see others who were different as a threat?

Do you think that the fear of others who were different may have started at roughly 12 or 13 years of age?

Thankfully, The Ranches has the opportunity to build relationships with kids who are in this impressionable age range. When we get it right – and we are constantly striving to get it right – we can address, influence, reformat and rebuild the views of young people so that they do not become like so many in our society who are dedicated to always distancing themselves from people who think, believe and even look, differently.

While we often couch our armchair diagnosis as being empathetic or protective of those that we love and principles that we care deeply about, most people are smart enough to know when we see them as a threat, even if it's as an emotional threat. Others see the slight differences in how we treat different people and begin to try and protect themselves from these perceived threats.

I wish that we would just say what we mean: "I would like to be the first to identify that this person is, in my opinion, difficult, insincere, dishonest and undeserving of love." Or "There is just something about this person that I can easily identify because I actively hate that same thing about myself."

Imagine what it might be like if we started our relationship with every other person believing that they deserved grace and the benefit of the doubt?

These behaviors...this amateur diagnosing and prejudging creates emotional weather that is treacherous and difficult for those around us – particularly those who are different – to navigate. In our homes, in our jobs and (whenever they return) in our schools, we contribute to the overall weather. The greater our position in those places, the greater the impact we have on the emotional weather when we are present.

The Emotional Weather That We Need

Most people and almost all kids assume that others, particularly those who seem to have a better life situation, are living in the emotional weather that they want and need. That assumption seems to be demonstrably and incredibly false. So, I will backtrack a bit and talk about the importance of being in the weather that we need.

To describe the issue more succinctly; We all have an emotional environment that is our favored environment and there are a series of prerequisites that must be met to create that

favored environment. This preferred environment is either similar to our childhood years or quite the opposite. Examples of this include quiet in the morning, not interrupting adults, "please" and "thank you" and "no sir" and "yes ma'am" and concepts like more doing and less talking. Many of us can remember the old "Calgon - Take Me away!" commercials and can imagine that the mom at the center of those commercials was in the midst of some stormy emotional weather.

We, however, are working with kids and while we work with them, we (the staff) are all attempting to create emotional weather on our campus and in our cottages that match our favored emotional environment as closely as possible; even if it isn't the favorite weather of our spouse or of other staff that we are working with.

In a moment, I will give you the weather that I most appreciate. (You'll notice that I didn't say "need" as one of the issues that I bring to the table – one of my weather patterns - is my belief that any need that I have is inconvenient and burdensome to others). Part of my weather is centered around not needing anything and being self-sufficient and self-contained. I get frustrated when I need keys, passwords, codes, ingredients for meals, explanations for med counts being off, recipes, gas in one of our vans, etc. I want all of those things to be readily available without having to ask, demand or go looking. The moment that I need something, my emotional weather changes. Here's the thing...my kids and the kids at The Ranches know this about me and respond accordingly when it happens because they aren't stupid, and they certainly aren't emotionally incompetent.

The weather that is best for me is one where adults rarely, if ever, freak out, adults work very hard to NOT make situations all about themselves and adults are self-aware and authentic. I have worked with more than a few people who were authentic to their ignorance and dysfunction but weren't self-aware enough to recognize their ignorance or their dysfunction. These people are, in a word, tiring. I also don't do well with people who are emotionally fragile. Interestingly, a good number of the most staggeringly fragile people that I have worked with are mean, hateful and trying to convince the world of how tough they are and how much they don't care about what other people think. While this sounds like they don't understand the definition of fragile, these people are just scared little tough guys who are trying to overcompensate for their insecurity with overconfidence. This is often couched in victimhood as they often believe that every system is rigged against them and that they are awesome and everyone else doesn't "get it" or "can't handle them." These people are hard for me as they screw up the emotional weather that I need and also the overall weather at The Ranches. While I always hope to change their weather patterns, often we just have to part ways for the sake of the kids.

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#RAISETHEMUP @THERANCHES

Literature Class

I have always loved books. It didn't matter what the book was, I could find a way to love it. Literature was always a way to escape reality for a moment and it was something that would always be needed.

Upon returning to The Ranches, this time as a staff member assisting in the classroom, the first thing I noticed were reading skills were not as high as I would have liked them to be. That is when we decided to develop a literature class for the residents.

The books tackled were *A Wrinkle in Time*, (L'Engle, 1963) and *Fahrenheit 451*, (Bradbury, 1953); Two classic books that I hoped would spark an interest. For an hour a week, residents get together, and we read. We talk about the characters we meet; we talk about the different worlds they have been introduced to, and we stumble over tricky words together until we get them right. It has been a pleasure to hear the residents stumble over fewer words and find excitement in flipping the page.

By MJ Olivares



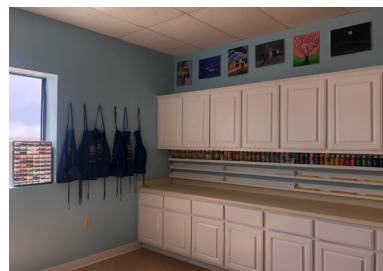
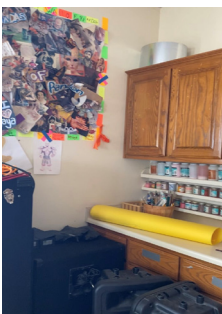
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Art Room

If you looked at the Art Room in February, then walked in now, you would not recognize the area you just stepped into. Where splatters of paint and dried clay caked the walls now is a light sky-blue color that is instantly calming. Where shelves stood that were falling apart and storing old items, there are aprons hung, construction paper organized, and paint brushes in little cups ready to be used. The tables are wrapped in paper so as much paint and clay can be used without a worry. Even better was the residents being able to assist in completely changing a room. The pride that the kids felt when they remembered what the room started off looking like was great to see. Better still was hearing them singing country songs while watching them apply that sky-blue coat on the messy white walls.

Along with the remodel of the room, residents have once again been able to participate in weekly art classes. Residents will use many different mediums from crayons to watercolor paints. The excitement of having some time away from normal day to day classes to create something colorful has been incredibly beneficial and has been something the residents enjoy doing. It has been amazing to see the hidden talents some of the residents have when they can put a pencil on sketch paper or move paint around a canvas with ease. Art has always been one of the primary ways to express oneself and being able to provide a room where this can be done is rewarding beyond words.

By MJ Olivares





THEIR JOURNEY





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As a result of these things, I work best with a small group of people who value me and are self-aware and authentic while not making things about themselves, blaming others for their mistakes or being the victims of their own choices.

This is what I need, and it is not the responsibility of my kids or the kids at The Ranches to provide it for me. It is my responsibility to actively create weather that is best for kids, best for other staff and, lastly, best for me.

When I am working with kids, I work to create weather for the kids that is similar to what I need:

- It isn't about me
- I will meet my own needs so that I can then meet yours
- My needs are not your concern because I am an adult with boundaries
- I will ask before I command
- I will assume that you, as a child, are uncomfortable with asking for your needs to be met so I will try to anticipate and make sure that you don't have to ask - And I will not punish you for your needs
- I know that control is the illusion of the stupid so I will seek to influence instead of control
- I will tell the truth and expect the truth - Communication is critical
- I will always try to be cool...until you push the boundaries to the point that I have to be uncool

It is my job to keep you safe and, since you don't know me from Adam, I understand that I will have to start by convincing you that you don't have to worry about me hurting you and that you are safe with me...and I will do this with my decisions and with displaying to you my ability to practice self-control.

- I will remain as consistent as possible so that you can predict me as easily as possible
- I am old enough that my life is my fault, but you are young enough that your life is your fate and not your fault
- I will do everything that I can to give you the necessary tools to transition to adulthood where your life is a product of your choices and is, therefore, your fault.
- I will try to remind you at every opportunity that I like spending time with you. This may be in action more than words.
- I will reward what I appreciate because I know MY priorities
- I will not reward what will not serve you well in life

If we must have our needs met before we can find it within ourselves to meet the needs of kids, we will have to learn to be honest about what we need and find healthy ways to meet those needs. If this is the case though, then it isn't about the kids. It is about you. It is time to grow...hopefully UP.

In Search of Safer Weather...

Mark 4:35-41 New International Version (NIV)

³⁵That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."³⁶ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.³⁷ A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"³⁹ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

⁴¹ They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Maybe tomorrow will be better...

Now that I have explained my views on the emotional weather that we create and also the emotional weather that we need, I will close by discussing children's need for safer weather. Safer emotional weather is what all kids come to The Ranches hoping to find. There just isn't any way to get to The Ranches without having first navigated some pretty difficult emotional weather. From divorce to abuse to the death of a parent, the weather has been, for the most part, tumultuous for kids prior to coming to us. As such, kids come to us hoping for safer weather. Being that I went to the trouble of laying out the case for us being in control of the weather that we create and that our natural tendency is to create the weather that we need, it is important that we take a look at the weather that we create - knowing that it resembles the weather that we feel that we need - and try to insure that we are creating safer weather for the kids in our care. Not safer for us - it still isn't about us - but safer for the kids than the weather that they come from. My goal is that we will be a temporary safe port in their storm for kids. Temporary in that we are only a part of their life for a short time and a safe port in that we have the opportunity to be different from where they came from and hopefully better. If all goes extremely well, hopefully the kids in our care now will be able to create safe and stable weather for their own children when the time comes.

It is naive and ignorant to believe that all kids and adults seek calmer and safer weather as we have far too many examples of both adults and kids chasing after stormy relationships with stormy people. I am hopeful that we do not end up being another storm for kids to chase. I also want to teach kids and adults that storms are going to come and there is no need to chase them just to create what they are used to. Just because someone has become comfortable in storms does not mean



that they should be forced to live in storms for the rest of their lives. This is why I am dedicated to safer weather. But what does safer emotional weather look like for kids? I'm glad you asked. In my opinion kids need the emotional weather to be safe and it starts with a few concepts.

1. The expectations are clear and rarely change and never drastically change
2. The expectations are equitably applied to all
3. Special treatment is earned and not a product of favoritism
4. The adults are consistent and predictable
5. Adults will keep kids safe from peers (siblings within families) and from themselves
6. All will have enough to eat and someone will pay attention to the nourishment of kids
7. Adults will pay attention to things that "set kids off" - from loud noise in the morning to bedtime stress - and someone is always paying attention
8. Despite kid's feelings and reactions to rules, they are important and won't change - They are also applied equitably; always
9. Kids are heard
10. Each kid is, in their own way, enough
11. No kids are "too much" because we are the adults, we are professional, and adults will not further a child's shame
12. Kids are not stupid, and it will be addressed if said - even when they say it to themselves
13. Adults will not treat kids as a burden, an inconvenience or a mistake
14. Adults will make it about kids even when some adults try to make it about themselves
15. Adults are honest
16. Adults are self-aware
17. Adults can handle conflict - even if kids make it personal and attack them or those that they love - because they are adults and can handle just about anything
18. Adults will provide nurturing, accountability, discipline and protection
19. Someone will always be paying attention to the kids and looking out for them
20. We will intentionally choose to make every effort to never further a child's shame or cause additional pain

When we recognize that we can create the emotional weather, that we are always creating emotional weather, that we tend to create the emotional weather that we are most comfortable with and that kids need us to intentionally create safer weather, we can then be infinitely effective with an incredibly wide range of kids...of all ages.

THANK YOU

Thank you to all the businesses, organizations and churches that made monetary gifts in excess of \$250 during the period of April 1, 2020 - June 30, 2020. We deeply appreciate your commitment to children and families!

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FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN

Do you have room...in your heart...in your home?

Residents come to the ranch from both private and state placements. Many have families and a home to return to while others either do not or those homes are not safe or functional. Absent Coronavirus restrictions, most residents spend one weekend a month and two vacation periods a year with their homes of origin. Not so for some of the children in our care. Families for Children (FFC), our Foster Care Agency, wants to change this. We want to develop foster care respite homes for these children who would then have a family (in the greater Albuquerque metro area) who they could develop a relationship with, spend one weekend a month with, and perhaps share their vacation times each year. As welcoming and beneficial as The Ranch is, children still get 'ranch weary' and need an occasional break in scenery. Helping some of these children build an extended support system is one more step toward our goal of helping them launch into adulthood with the tools and extended connections many of us take for granted. If you, or someone you know, would consider such an opportunity, please contact FFC at 505-881-3363.

Help Us Share Our Story

Representatives of New Mexico Boys and Girls Ranches are available to meet with clubs, civic organizations and fellowship groups to share our story of bringing hope to hurting youth, either in person or via the web.

If you are interested in arranging a speaking engagement for your organization, simply give us a call at (505) 881-3363 or (800) 660-0289.

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