Between Rebellion and Care

A Book About School, Silence, and the Courage to Choose Contact

Translated from Danish

By Pierre Michael Raas

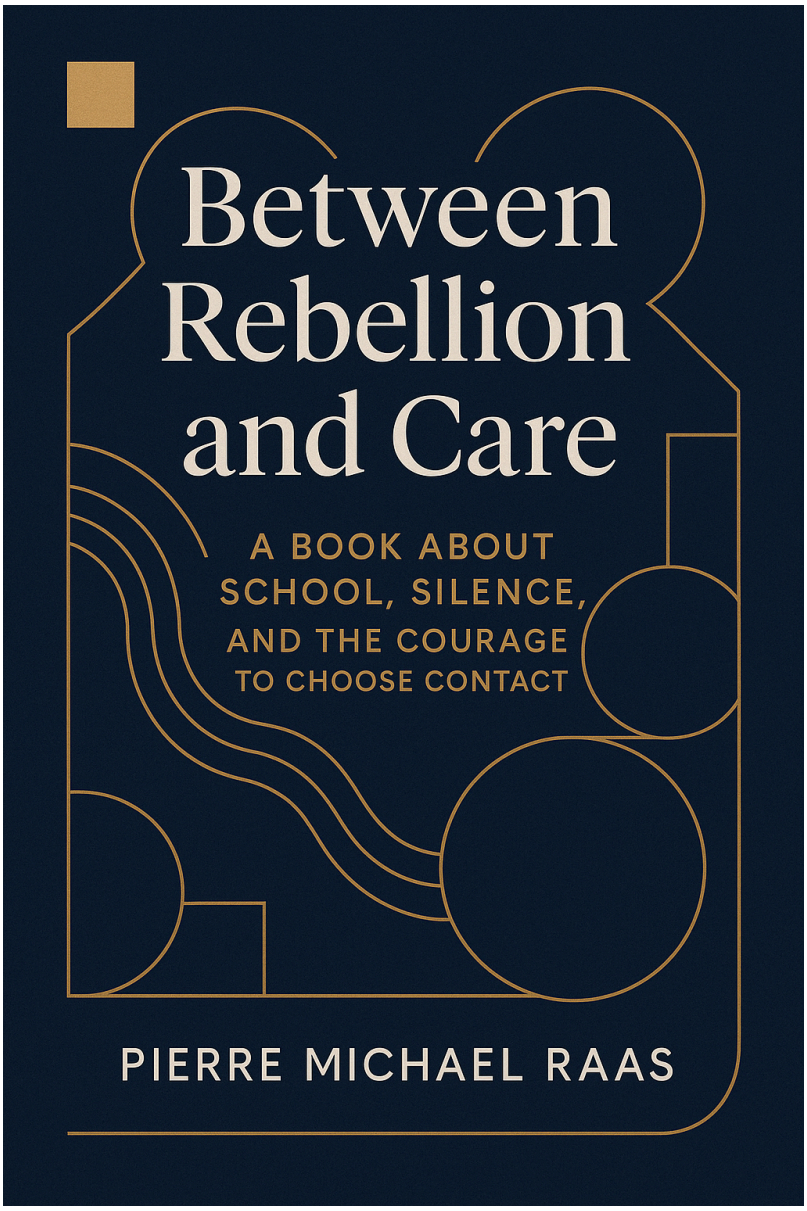


Table of Contents

Foreword 3

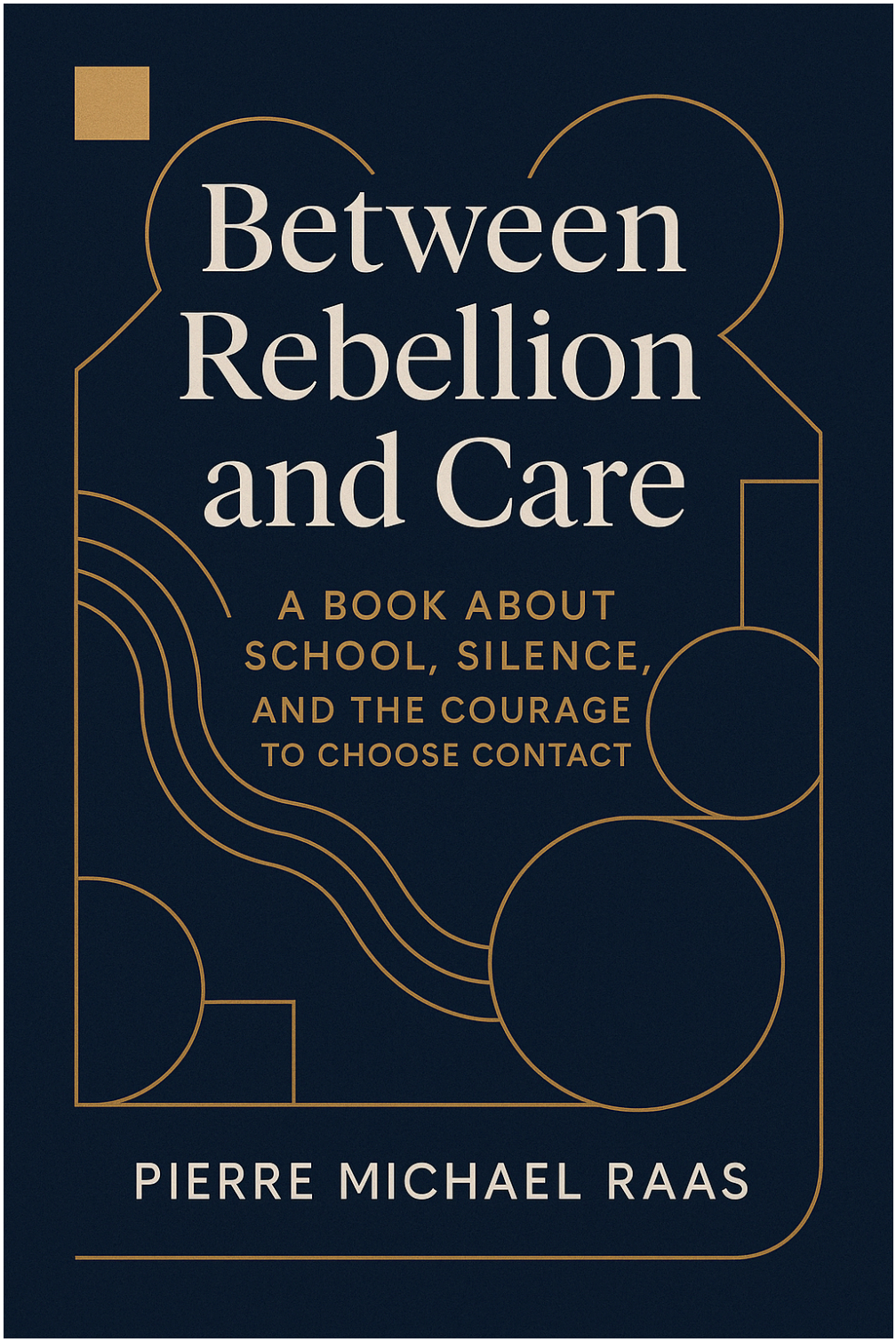
Chapter 1 – Formation in Practice 5
Chapter 2 – The School's Silent Language 9
Chapter 3 – The Raw Material of Relationships 13
Chapter 4 – What We Don't Talk About 17
Chapter 5 – The Form of Community 21
Chapter 6 – Leadership and Powerlessness 25
Chapter 7 – The Courage for In-Between Spaces 29
Chapter 8 – Professional Compassion 33
Chapter 9 – Schedule or Conversation? 37
Chapter 10 – When Children Speak First 41
Chapter 11 – System Failures and Silence 45
Chapter 12 – The Price of Silence 49
Chapter 13 – What We Choose to Look Away From 53
Chapter 14 – A School with Room for Doubt 57
Chapter 15 – Between Rebellion and Care 61
Chapter 16 – Digital Life and the Silent Screen 65
Chapter 17 – And What Now? 69

Afterword – Between Rebellion and Care 73
Acknowledgments 75

Appendix A – Questions for Reflection and Discussion 77
Appendix B – Practical Strategies for Educational Transformation 81
Appendix C – Resources for Further Learning 85
Appendix D – Conversation Starters and Discussion Protocols 89
Appendix E – Stories from Practice 93

About the Author 97

Foreword


Between Rebellion and Care
A BOOK ABOUT SCHOOL, SILENCE, AND THE COURAGE TO CHOOSE CONTACT
PIERRE MICHAEL RAAS

Between Rebellion and Care

There are moments in school life when we don't just teach — we wonder. When questions become more important than answers, and when the professional encounter with students, colleagues, and systems requires more than method. It requires courage. Human compassion. And sometimes — silence.

This book is not intended as a solution. It is not a system-critical manifesto or a teaching-technical handbook. It is intended as a conversation. A reflection. A space where we can look at practice, not as a series of tasks — but as an ethical and human field. A place where learning, relationship, and culture are woven together.

I have written for you who stand in the middle of it. You who have met children who cannot gather themselves, plans that don't fit, silences that speak louder than words. You who know powerlessness and hope in the same workday. You who still believe that school can be a living place — not just a structure, but a culture.

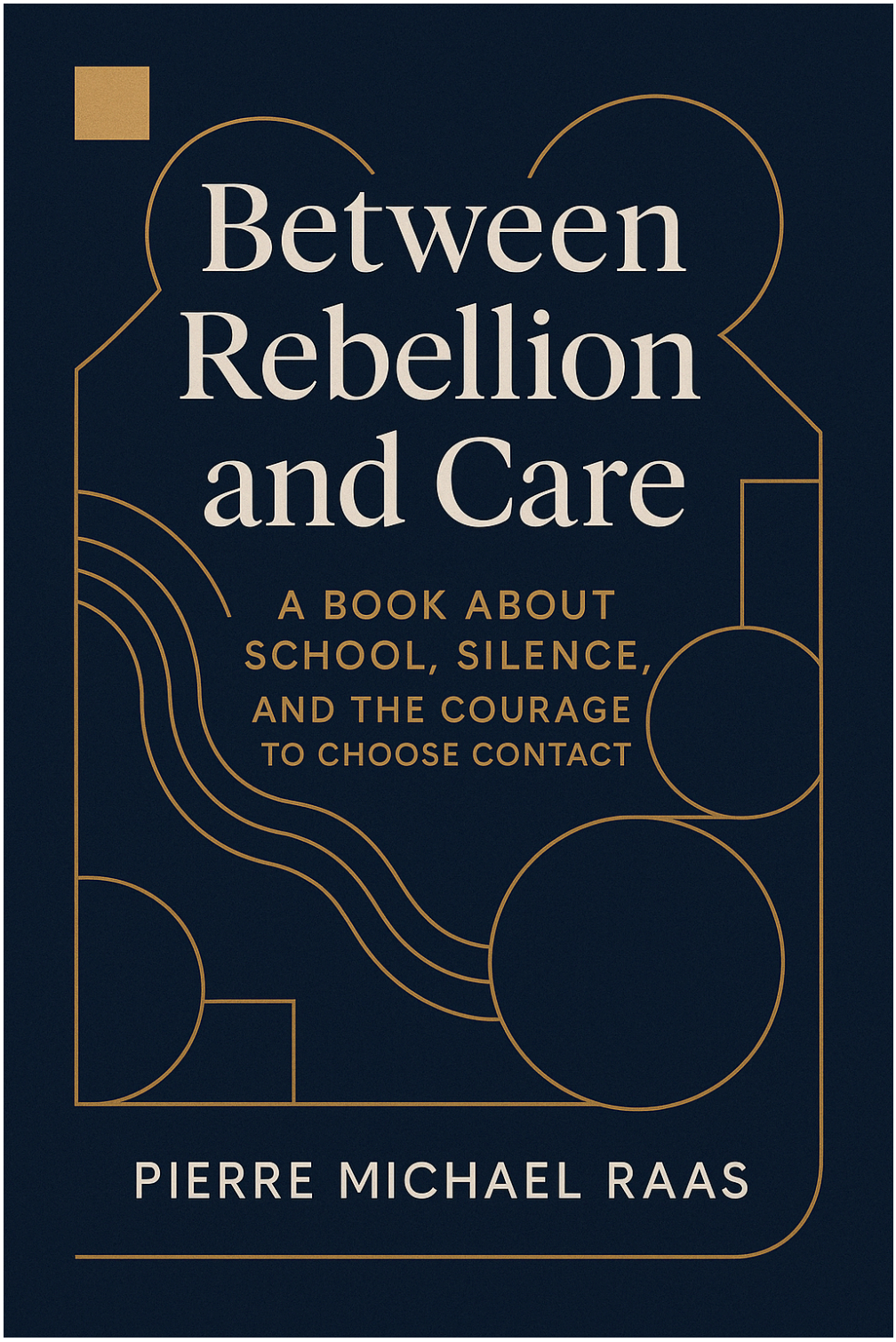
We move here between rebellion and care. The rebellion that says "this doesn't make sense." And the care that insists on staying — even when the relationship hurts. It is in that tension that this book lives.

You will not find a checklist here. You will find voices, practice stories, ethical questions, and an invitation: To think, converse, and create school together — again.

Thank you for reading along. And thank you for still believing that something can change, because you choose to be present in it.

With warm regards,
Pierre M. Raas

Chapter 1 – Formation in Practice



School is not just a place for subjects. It is a place for life. Therefore, formation must be more than a word. It must be practice.

We often talk about formation. In mission statements, value foundations, conferences, and strategic plans. But we talk less often about how it is felt. What it requires. And what it costs. For formation is not a nicety. It is a process. A movement. An encounter where people — big and small — are shaped by each other and by the world.

Formation is not something we teach as a subject. It arises in the space between professionalism and relationship. It is not a goal. It is a choice.

Formation as Human Resilience

When we talk about formation, we are really talking about:

- **Ability for critical reflection**
- **Will to responsibility and co-responsibility**
- **Courage to be in doubt**
- **Ability to contain both oneself and the other**

Formation is what enables people to live — not just function. It's not about adapting to the system, but about being able to stand in the world with integrity. And in a school culture that often rewards performance over process, formation becomes a counterpoint. An alternative to operational neutrality.

The Professional Framework for Formation

Formation is not a feeling. It is a practice. The professional must be able to:

- **See more than the student's task**
- **Listen without need for quick solution**
- **Be in the silence, without breaking it with system logic**
- **Avoid transforming humanity into method**

Formation requires that the teacher dares to be human — with intention. And that can be uncomfortable. For there is no answer key. No goal to plot. Only relationship and responsibility.

Practice Stories – Three Glimpses from Reality

1. "I Don't Want To"

A 6th grade student said at the start of class:
"I don't want to today. My head is noisy."

The teacher could have responded with: *"Then you need to pull yourself together."* Instead she said:
"Tell me what your head is saying."

The student drew his thoughts with colors. Blue, black, red. They spent 12 minutes in conversation. Afterward, he participated in the lesson.

Formation: Being met in one's complexity.

2. A Father and an Absence Report

A parent was called in for a meeting. It said "concerning absence." He said:
"We are losing my wife to illness. My boy is losing himself."

The school chose to temporarily stop the absence strategy and establish presence. They created a daily contact surface. The child came back. Slowly.

Formation: Interrupting the system to maintain the human.

3. A Teacher with Discomfort

A teacher said to her team:
"I feel like an administrator — not a teacher."

The conversation became a reflection on the school's daily rhythms. They changed the meetings. Let practice stories fill more space.

Formation: Recognizing the distance — and choosing movement.

What Formation Must Never Become

Formation must never become:

- **A pedagogical decoration**

- **A headline for what we wish but don't do**
- **A structure used to hide pedagogical emptiness**
- **A value word that covers the absence of real contact**

If we talk about formation — without practicing it — it becomes an illusion. A derived security. And children sense when words are empty.

Formation as Rhythm and Relationship

Formation requires:

- **Rhythm that contains slowness**
- **Relationships that tolerate conflict**
- **Frameworks that open to the unplanned**
- **Professionals who tolerate not knowing**

We must understand formation as a movement — not a task.

When Formation is Disrupted by Operations

School is full of operations:

- Schedules, results, checklists
- Data, documentation, evaluation

But operations are neutral. Formation is normative. When operations win, we lose nerve. When formation gets space, human contact emerges.

Students on Formation

"The best was when we didn't have to do anything. Then we started talking." – Student, 7th grade

"My teacher didn't say 'you must.' She said 'what do you think?'" – Student, 8th grade

"I feel smart when someone hears my questions." – Student, 10th grade

These voices are not proof. They are practice.

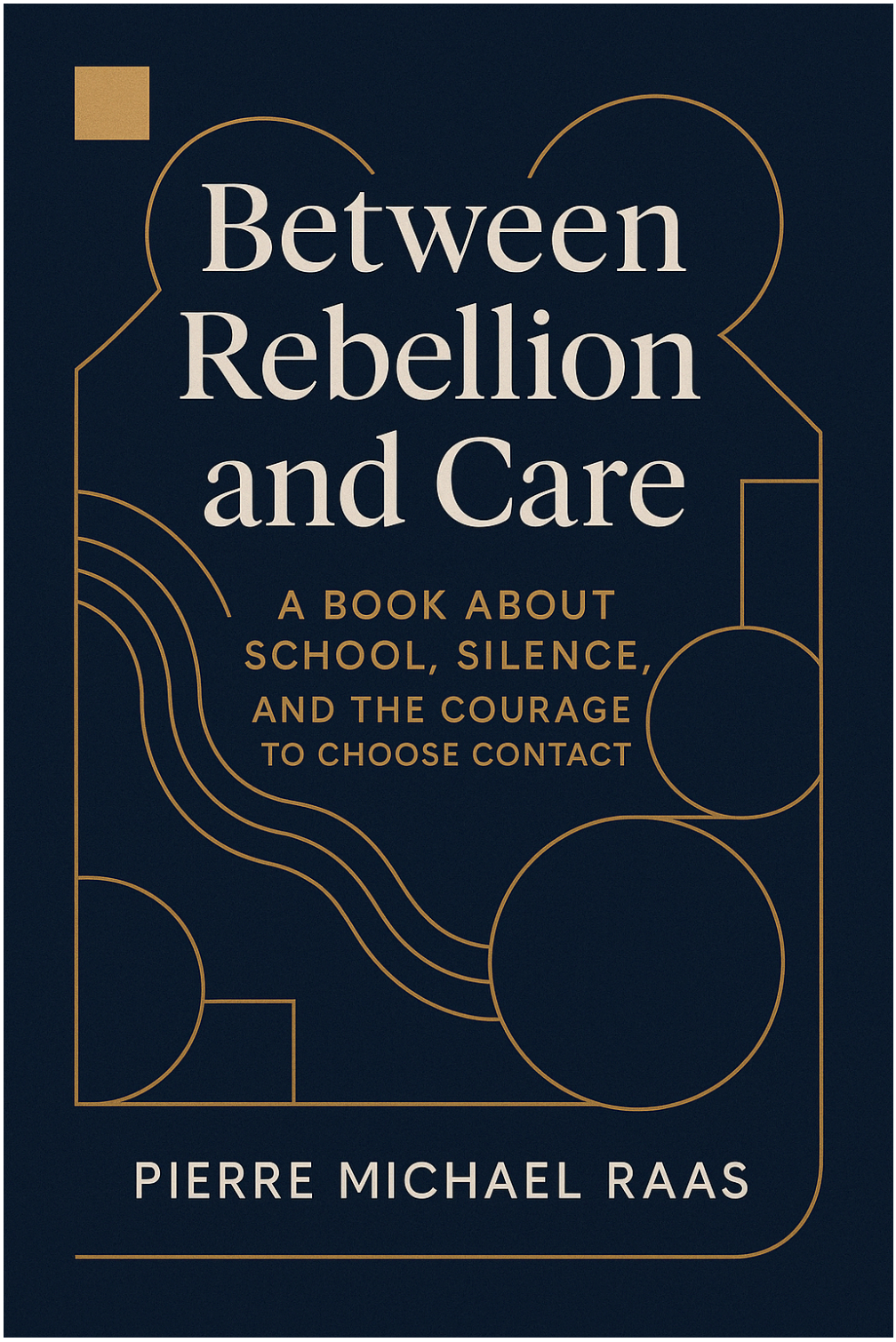
Philosophical Footnote

Formation has roots in Humboldt, Grundtvig, Klafki, and Biesta. But its present is local. In the hallway, in the room, in the moment. Formation is not a doctrine. It is a gaze. A will. And it emerges in the professional encounter with the human.

Reflection

- Which moments in your practice were formation — even though you didn't plan it?
- When have you prioritized the human over the academic — and what happened?
- What formation do you avoid because time is short — and how can you choose differently?

Chapter 2 – The School's Silent Language



Much is said in school that is never spoken aloud. The unspoken carries meaning. It has a voice. And sometimes it has more power than the spoken.

School communicates constantly. Not only through words, but through glances, structure, rhythms, and the absence of sound. There exists a silent language in the institution — and it shapes students' self-understanding, professional cultures, and the school's ethos.

The silent language is not the absence of communication. It is another form of communication — and precisely because of this, it is difficult to see, and even harder to change.

What is Silent Language?

The silent language in school expresses itself through:

- **Routines and habits** that are not necessarily chosen, but continued
- **The way we open and close spaces** — both physically and mentally
- **The time we use** — or don't use — for contact
- **What we don't talk about**, even when it calls for conversation
- **Lack of presence** — in the gaze, in the voice, in the body

Silence is never neutral. It takes sides. And often it doesn't choose the student's side.

Practice Story: A Door That Doesn't Open

A student told:
"I tried to come into the classroom, but the door was closed. I knocked three times. No one opened. The others looked, but said nothing."

The teacher said later:
"I thought he was late — and didn't want to disturb."

But the silence communicated:
"You are a disturbance." The student stayed away the next day.

The silent language is not visible in annual plans. But it has consequences.

Everyday Communication's Micro-choices

Silence also emerges in:

- **The lack of names** — when the student becomes "him" or "her"
- **The avoidance** — when we don't ask, even though we see unrest
- **The skip** — when we choose schedule over mood
- **The gaze that slides past**
- **The tone that says "not now"** without speaking it

All of this is part of the school's communicative landscape. And precisely because of this, it is the profession's responsibility to examine it.

Silence as Culture and Protection

The school's silence is not always negative. It can be:

- A **protection** against emotional overload
- A **defense** against complexity
- A **strategy** to make the day hang together
- An **expression of systemic stillness** — where there is no time for reflection

But when silence becomes culture, we lose the ability to talk about what matters. And then silence becomes not protective, but separating.

Practice Story: A Teacher in Silence

A teacher said:
"I haven't said anything to management about my distress — because I don't want to be a burden."

She had felt alone for months. But met smiles and silence.

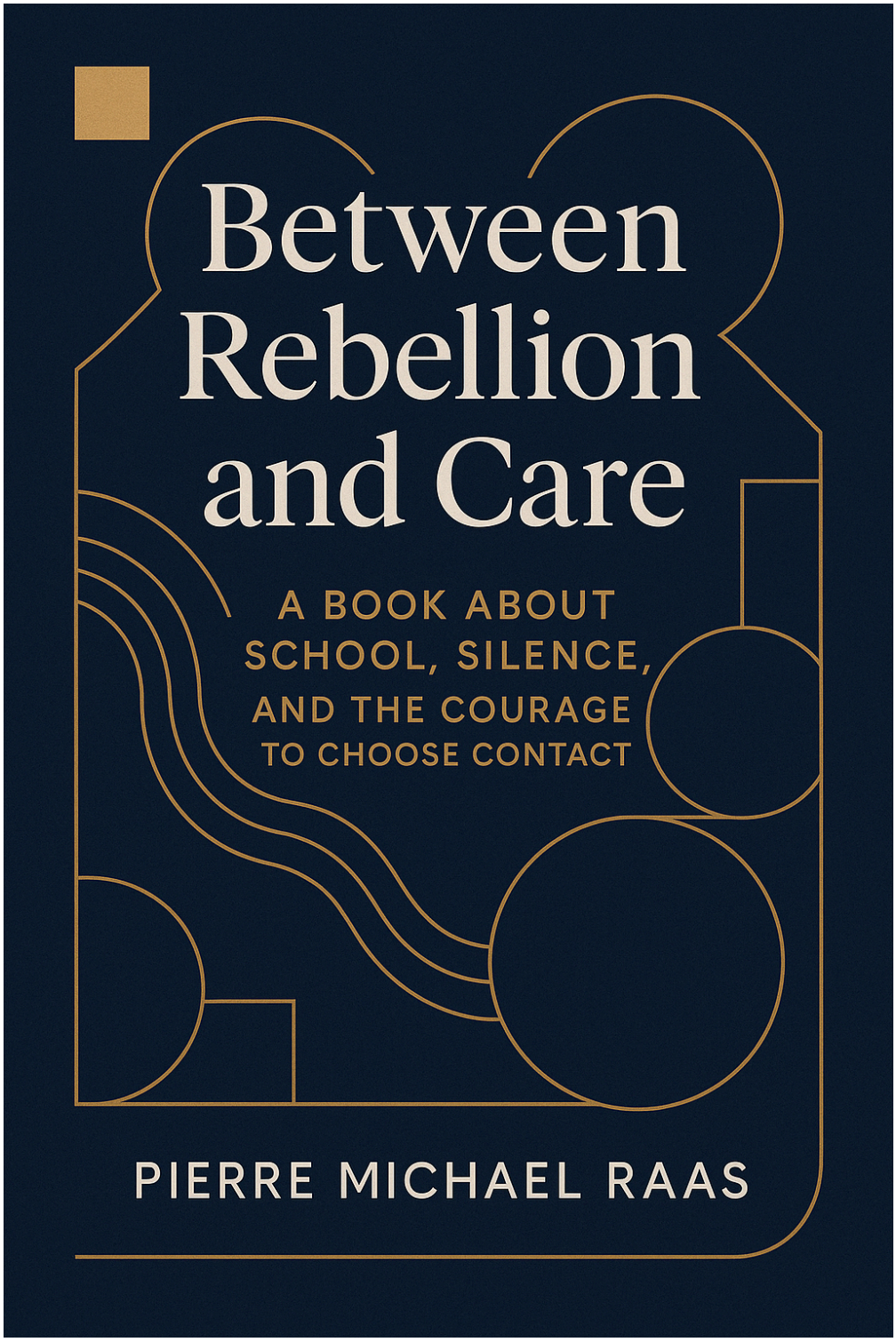
"No one asks. And I've learned to answer with 'I'm fine'."

The silence here becomes double communication: We show something, but say something else. And this is where professional silence creates culture.

Reflection

- What messages do you send without saying them?
- What have you seen but not said — and why?
- How can you create space for the conversations that matter?

Chapter 3 – The Raw Material of Relationships



Relationships are not a pedagogical tool. They are the raw material from which everything else is built. Without relationship, there is no learning. Without relationship, there is no formation. Without relationship, there is no school.

But relationships in school are complex. They are professional, but not neutral. They are caring, but not private. They are close, but not without boundaries. They are human, but not without purpose.

And precisely because of this complexity, relationships become one of the profession's most demanding — and most important — areas.

What is a Professional Relationship?

A professional relationship in school is characterized by:

- **Intentional care** — not accidental sympathy
- **Ethical responsibility** — not personal preference
- **Professional boundaries** — not emotional distance
- **Authentic presence** — not performed friendliness
- **Sustainable engagement** — not burnout-creating involvement

The professional relationship is not a friendship. But it is not neutral either. It is something third: A human encounter with professional intention.

Practice Story: A Student Who Tested Boundaries

Marcus was 14 years old and had learned that adults disappear when it becomes difficult. He tested every relationship with conflict, rejection, and provocation.

His teacher said:
"I will not give up on you. But I will not accept everything either."

She stayed. Through anger, through silence, through attempts to be thrown out. She stayed — with boundaries.

After three months, Marcus said:
"You're the first adult who didn't run away."

The relationship became the foundation for everything else.

The Paradox of Professional Distance

We are taught to maintain "professional distance." But what does that mean?

Professional distance is not: - **Emotional coldness** - **Lack of engagement** - **Avoidance of the personal** - **Fear of being human**

Professional distance is: - **Clarity about role and responsibility** - **Ability to contain without absorbing** - **Presence without possession** - **Care without control**

The paradox is that professional distance often requires more presence — not less.

When Relationships Become Difficult

Relationships in school become difficult when:

- **Boundaries are unclear** — for student or professional
- **Personal and professional merge** without intention
- **The professional becomes emotionally overwhelmed**
- **The student's needs exceed the framework's possibilities**
- **System demands conflict with relational needs**

But difficult relationships are not failed relationships. They are relationships that require more skill, more support, and more courage.

Practice Story: A Teacher's Dilemma

Sarah was a teacher who became very attached to a student from a troubled home. She started buying him clothes, giving him extra food, and staying late to help with homework.

Her colleagues said:
"You're doing too much. You can't save everyone."

But Sarah felt:
"If I don't help him, who will?"

The relationship became unsustainable. Sarah burned out, and the student felt abandoned when she had to step back.

The lesson: Good intentions are not enough. Professional relationships require professional skills.

Building Sustainable Relationships

Sustainable professional relationships require:

Emotional Regulation: The ability to stay calm and present even when students are dysregulated.

Clear Boundaries: Knowing what you can and cannot do, and communicating this clearly.

Team Support: Having colleagues who can help you process difficult situations.

Self-Care: Maintaining your own well-being so you can be present for students.

Realistic Expectations: Understanding that you cannot fix everything or save everyone.

The Power of Consistent Presence

Students often say that what matters most is not what teachers do, but that they show up consistently. Presence is more powerful than perfection.

"My teacher wasn't always happy, but she was always there." – Student, 9th grade

"I knew I could count on her, even when I couldn't count on myself." – Student, 8th grade

Voices from Practice

"The relationship is the curriculum. Everything else is just content." – Teacher, 15 years experience

"I learned that caring for students means caring for myself too." – Pedagogue, 8 years experience

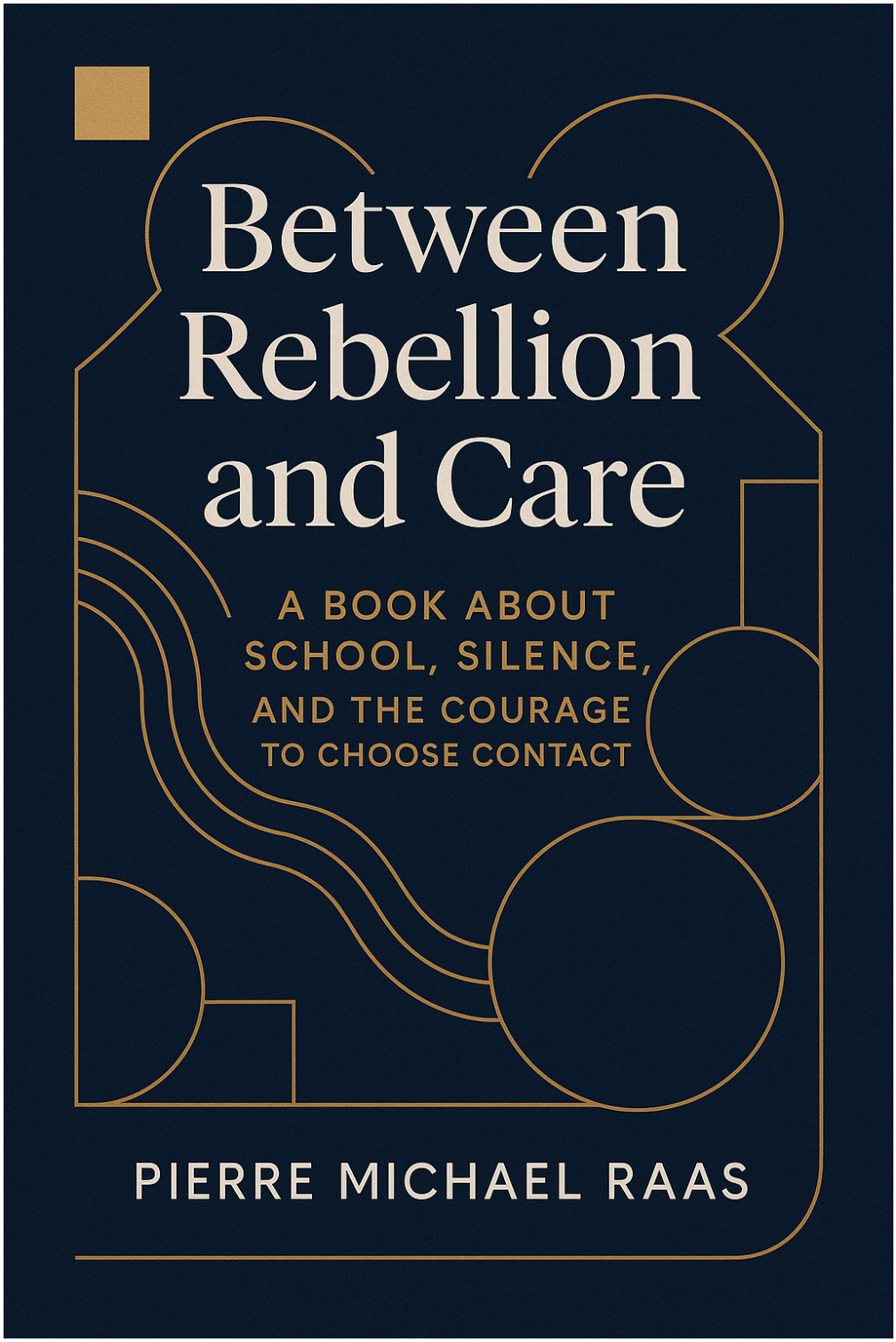
"The hardest part is knowing when to hold on and when to let go." – School counselor

Reflection

- What do you want with your relationships — and what don't you dare to want?

- When have you chosen content over presence — and what happened?
- How do you create a relational practice that tolerates your own boundaries?

Chapter 4 – What We Don't Talk About



There are conversations we avoid. Not because they are unimportant, but because they are too important. Because they touch something that hurts. Because they

require us to be vulnerable in a professional context that often rewards certainty over authenticity.

In school, we talk about many things. Curriculum, assessment, behavior management, data analysis. But we talk less about fear, doubt, grief, hope, and the human cost of our work. We talk less about what it feels like to fail a student, to be overwhelmed by need, to question our own competence.

And in this silence, we lose something essential: the ability to support each other through the most challenging aspects of our work.

The Unspoken Curriculum

Every school has an unspoken curriculum — the things we learn but never explicitly teach:

- How to hide when you're struggling
- How to appear competent when you feel lost
- How to smile when you want to cry
- How to say "I'm fine" when you're not
- How to carry burdens alone

This hidden curriculum shapes both students and staff, creating cultures of isolation rather than connection.

Practice Story: A Teacher's Secret

Jennifer had been teaching for eight years when she started having panic attacks before school. She would sit in her car in the parking lot, trying to calm her breathing, wondering if she could make it through another day.

But when colleagues asked how she was doing, she always said, "Great! Busy, but great!"

She was afraid that admitting her struggles would be seen as weakness, that she would be judged as incompetent, that she might lose her job.

It wasn't until a colleague shared her own struggles that Jennifer realized she wasn't alone — and that her silence was making everything worse.

What We Avoid Talking About

Professional Struggles: - Feeling incompetent or overwhelmed - Questioning our career choice - Struggling with difficult students or parents - Feeling unsupported by administration - Experiencing burnout or compassion fatigue

Personal Challenges: - Mental health struggles - Family problems affecting work - Financial stress - Health issues - Grief and loss

Systemic Issues: - Policies that harm students - Inadequate resources - Unrealistic expectations - Ethical dilemmas - Institutional racism or bias

Relational Difficulties: - Conflicts with colleagues - Feeling isolated or excluded - Disagreements about practice - Power dynamics - Communication breakdowns

The Cost of Silence

When we don't talk about these things, several things happen:

Individual Level: - Increased stress and isolation - Decreased job satisfaction - Higher risk of burnout - Reduced effectiveness - Physical and mental health problems

Relational Level: - Superficial connections with colleagues - Missed opportunities for support - Increased misunderstandings - Erosion of trust - Competitive rather than collaborative culture

Organizational Level: - Problems persist and worsen - Talent leaves the profession - Innovation decreases - Student outcomes suffer - Toxic cultures develop

Creating Space for Difficult Conversations

Breaking the silence requires intentional effort:

Leadership Modeling: - Leaders sharing their own struggles and uncertainties - Creating regular opportunities for honest dialogue - Responding supportively when people are vulnerable - Addressing systemic issues that create stress

Cultural Shifts: - Normalizing struggle as part of the human experience - Celebrating growth and learning from mistakes - Prioritizing well-being alongside performance - Building trust through consistent support

Structural Changes: - Regular check-ins focused on well-being - Professional development on emotional intelligence - Access to mental health resources - Policies that support work-life balance

Practice Story: A School That Changed

Roosevelt Elementary was struggling with high teacher turnover and low morale. The new principal, Maria, decided to start every staff meeting with a "real check-in" where people could share how they were actually doing.

At first, people were hesitant. But gradually, teachers began to open up. They talked about their struggles with difficult students, their fears about new initiatives, their personal challenges.

Instead of falling apart, the school community grew stronger. Teachers started supporting each other more, collaborating on solutions, and feeling less alone in their challenges.

Test scores didn't immediately improve, but teacher retention did. And over time, as teachers felt more supported, student outcomes improved too.

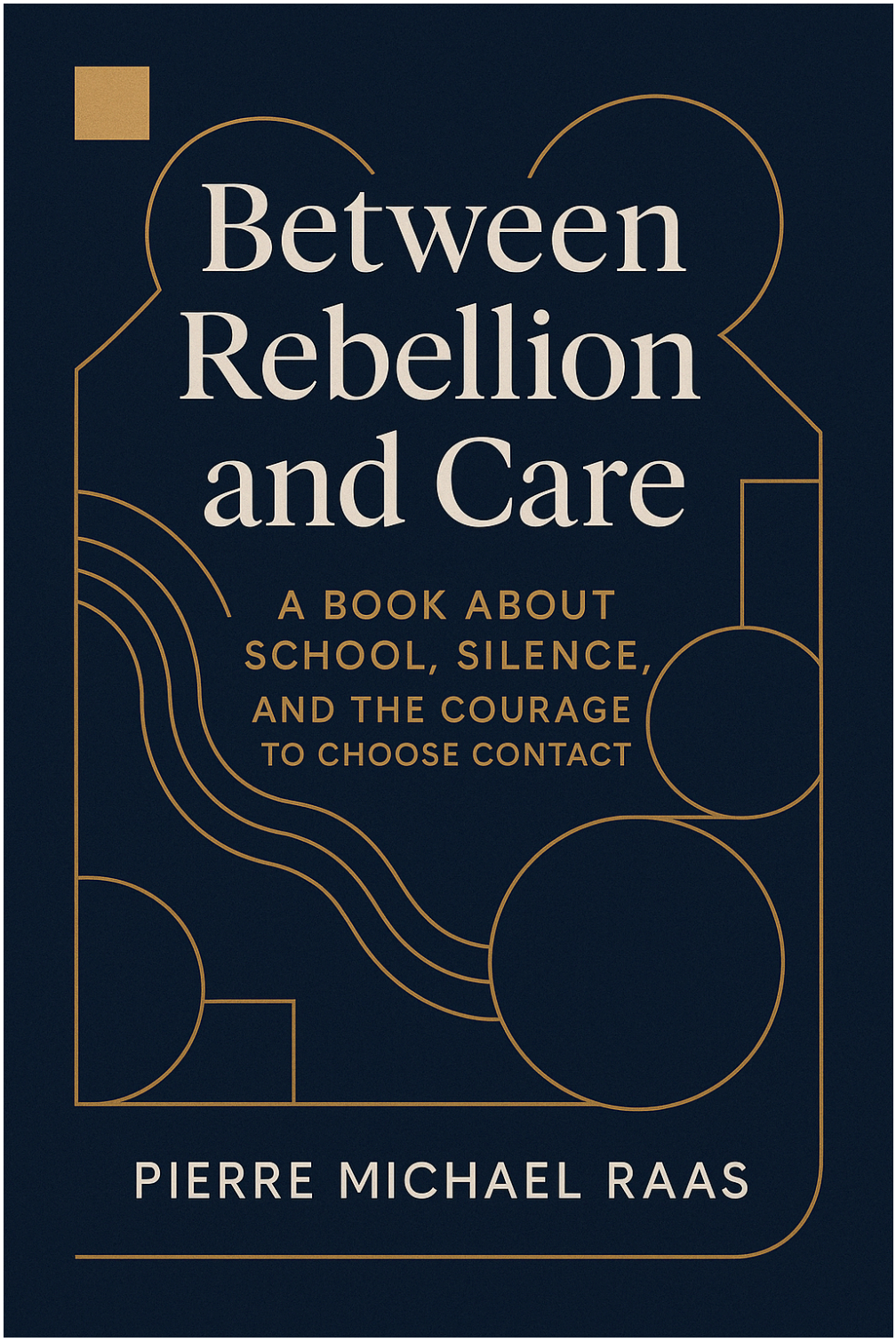
The Courage to Be Human

Talking about what we don't usually talk about requires courage. But it also creates courage. When one person finds the voice to speak about struggle, it gives others permission to do the same.

Reflection

- What silence are you carrying, and what is it costing you?
- When have you chosen silence over truth, and what were the consequences?
- How might your relationships change if you found the courage to speak more authentically?

Chapter 5 – The Form of Community



Community is not something that happens by itself. It is something we create — through choices, through attention, through the courage to include rather than exclude.

In school, we often talk about community as if it were a given. "We are a community." "Our school community." "Community values." But community is not a state. It is a practice. And like all practices, it requires skill, intention, and constant renewal.

What Makes a Community?

True community is characterized by:

- **Belonging** — everyone has a place and knows it
- **Mutual responsibility** — we care for each other's well-being
- **Shared purpose** — we work toward common goals
- **Authentic relationships** — we know and are known by others
- **Inclusive practices** — differences are valued, not just tolerated

Community is not uniformity. It is unity within diversity.

Practice Story: The Lunch Table

At Jefferson Middle School, there was an unspoken rule about the cafeteria. The "smart kids" sat at certain tables, the "athletes" at others, the "quiet kids" found corners, and some students ate alone.

Ms. Rodriguez, a 7th grade teacher, noticed that several of her students seemed isolated during lunch. Instead of just feeling sorry for them, she decided to act.

She started eating lunch in the cafeteria once a week, sitting with different groups of students. She asked questions, listened to their stories, and gradually began connecting students who had things in common but had never talked.

She also worked with the student council to create "mix-it-up" days where students were encouraged to sit with people they didn't usually talk to.

Slowly, the rigid social boundaries began to soften. Students started reaching across difference, and the cafeteria became a more welcoming place for everyone.

The Barriers to Community

Several things can prevent true community from forming:

Competition over Collaboration: When students are constantly compared to each other, it creates division rather than connection.

Exclusionary Practices: Policies or traditions that leave some people out, whether intentionally or not.

Lack of Shared Experiences: When people don't have opportunities to work together toward common goals.

Unaddressed Conflicts: When problems are ignored rather than worked through constructively.

Adult Modeling: When adults don't demonstrate inclusive, collaborative behavior.

Building Inclusive Community

Creating true community requires intentional action:

Start with Welcome: - How do new students and families experience their first days? - What messages do our physical spaces send about who belongs? - How do we help people find their place in the community?

Create Shared Experiences: - Collaborative projects that require diverse skills - School-wide events that bring people together - Service learning that connects to community needs - Celebrations that honor different cultures and traditions

Address Exclusion: - Notice who is left out and why - Examine policies and practices for unintended barriers - Teach students skills for including others - Intervene when exclusion occurs

Build Bridges: - Create opportunities for people to work across difference - Share stories that help people understand each other - Facilitate difficult conversations about bias and privilege - Celebrate what we have in common while honoring what makes us unique

Practice Story: The New Student

When Ahmed arrived at Lincoln Elementary in October, he spoke very little English and knew no one. His teacher, Mrs. Chen, could have simply assigned him a desk and hoped for the best.

Instead, she spent time learning about Ahmed's background, interests, and strengths. She discovered he was excellent at math and loved soccer.

She paired him with a bilingual student for academic support and connected him with other soccer players at recess. She also invited his family to share their culture with the class.

Within a month, Ahmed had friends, was participating in class, and was teaching other students Arabic words. The whole class benefited from his presence.

The Role of Adults in Community Building

Adults play a crucial role in shaping school community:

Modeling Inclusion: - How do we interact with colleagues who are different from us? - Do we reach out to isolated staff members? - How do we handle conflicts and disagreements?

Creating Structures: - What systems support community building? - How do we organize classes, activities, and events? - What policies help or hinder inclusion?

Teaching Skills: - Do students know how to include others? - Can they navigate conflicts constructively? - Do they understand the value of diversity?

When Community Breaks Down

Sometimes communities fracture. When this happens, healing requires:

Acknowledgment: Recognizing what went wrong without minimizing the harm.

Accountability: Taking responsibility for our part in the breakdown.

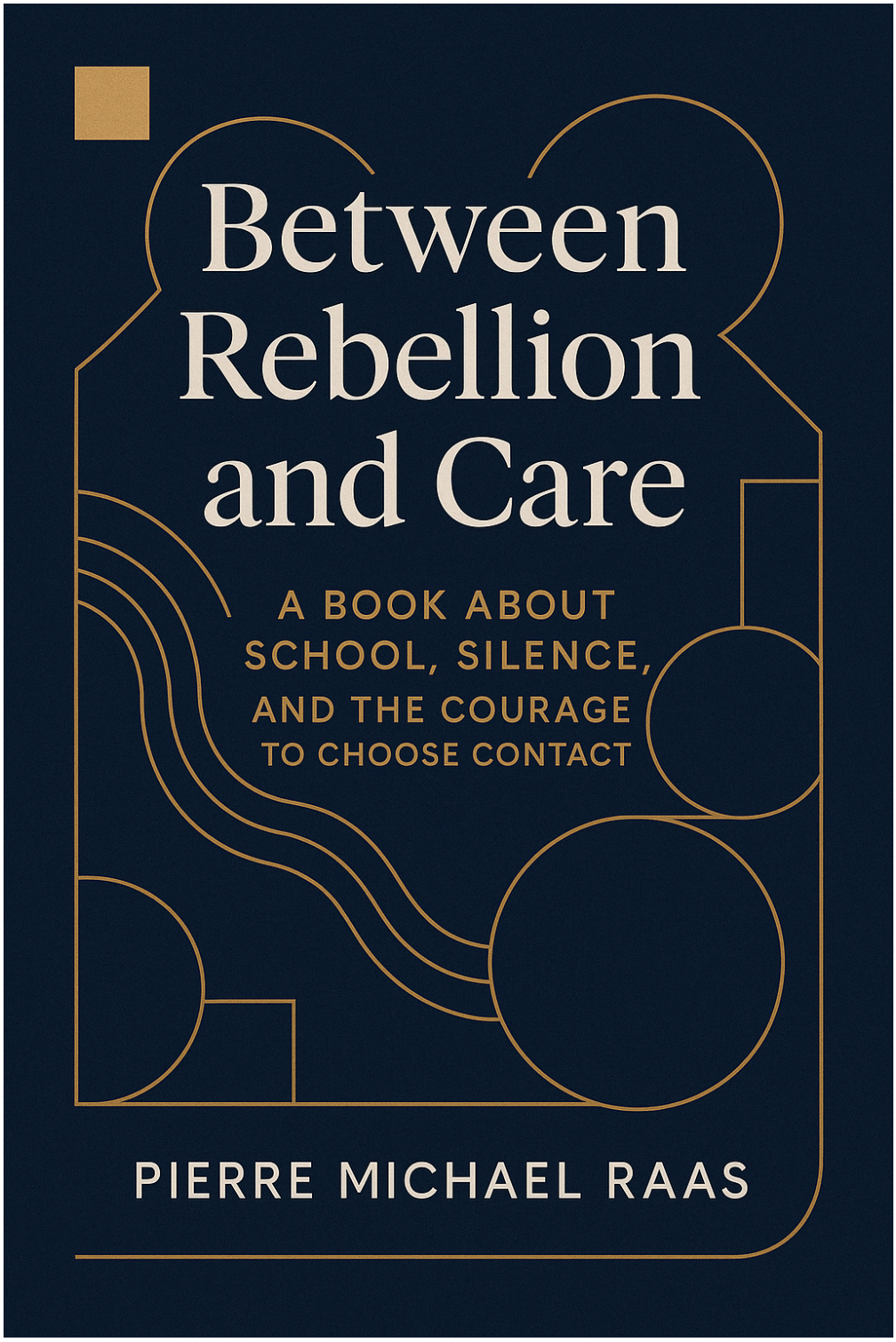
Action: Making concrete changes to prevent future harm.

Time: Understanding that rebuilding trust takes patience and consistency.

Reflection

- Who is included in your community — and who isn't?
- What do you need to change — so someone can step in?
- When have you created community — without knowing it?

Chapter 6 – Leadership and Powerlessness



Leadership in education is a paradox. You have responsibility for everything, but control over very little. You are expected to create change, but work within systems that resist change. You must inspire others while often feeling overwhelmed yourself.

This is the reality of educational leadership: the tension between what is expected and what is possible, between the desire to make a difference and the constraints that limit action.

The Myth of the Powerful Leader

Popular culture often portrays leaders as powerful figures who single-handedly transform organizations. But educational leaders know a different reality:

- **Budgets are set by others**
- **Policies come from above**
- **Union contracts limit flexibility**
- **Community expectations vary widely**
- **Student needs often exceed available resources**

Real leadership happens not through power, but through influence, relationship, and the ability to work within constraints while still creating meaningful change.

Practice Story: The Principal's Dilemma

Dr. Martinez became principal of Washington High School with big dreams. She wanted to reduce class sizes, increase counseling support, and implement innovative teaching methods.

But her first year was spent managing a budget crisis, dealing with a teacher shortage, and responding to district mandates that seemed to contradict her vision.

She felt powerless and frustrated. Was she making any difference at all?

It wasn't until she started focusing on small changes — improving communication, supporting struggling teachers, celebrating student successes — that she began to see her impact.

She learned that leadership is often about creating conditions for others to succeed, rather than implementing grand visions.

The Sources of Educational Powerlessness

Educational leaders face powerlessness from multiple directions:

From Above: - District mandates that don't fit local context - State policies that ignore school realities - Federal requirements that come without funding - Political pressures that change with elections

From Below: - Teacher resistance to change - Student needs that exceed capacity - Parent demands that conflict with each other - Community expectations that are unrealistic

From Within: - Limited resources and time - Competing priorities and demands - Personal limitations and blind spots - The complexity of human systems

Finding Power in Powerlessness

Paradoxically, acknowledging powerlessness can be empowering:

Clarity about Control: Understanding what you can and cannot control helps focus energy on what matters most.

Authentic Leadership: Being honest about limitations builds trust and credibility with staff and community.

Collaborative Approach: Recognizing that you can't do everything alone opens space for others to contribute.

Sustainable Practice: Accepting constraints prevents burnout and enables long-term effectiveness.

Practice Story: The Superintendent's Choice

Superintendent Johnson faced a difficult decision. The school board wanted to implement a new testing program that would consume significant time and resources. Teachers were already overwhelmed, and she knew the tests wouldn't improve learning.

She had two choices: comply quietly or speak up and risk her job.

She chose to speak up. She presented data on the impact of over-testing, shared teacher concerns, and proposed alternatives.

The board initially resisted, but her willingness to advocate for students and teachers ultimately led to a compromise that reduced testing while still meeting accountability requirements.

Leading Through Influence

When formal power is limited, leaders must rely on influence:

Relationship Building: - Investing time in getting to know people - Listening to understand, not just to respond - Building trust through consistency and integrity - Showing genuine care for others' well-being

Vision Sharing: - Articulating a compelling picture of what's possible - Connecting daily work to larger purposes - Helping others see their role in the bigger picture - Celebrating progress toward shared goals

Capacity Building: - Developing others' skills and confidence - Providing resources and support for growth - Creating opportunities for leadership development - Recognizing and utilizing people's strengths

Culture Shaping: - Modeling the values you want to see - Telling stories that reinforce desired behaviors - Creating rituals and traditions that build community - Addressing behaviors that undermine the culture

The Courage to Lead

Educational leadership requires different kinds of courage:

Moral Courage: Standing up for what's right, even when it's difficult or unpopular.

Intellectual Courage: Questioning assumptions and challenging conventional wisdom.

Emotional Courage: Being vulnerable and authentic in relationships.

Physical Courage: Taking care of yourself so you can sustain your work.

When Leaders Feel Lost

All leaders sometimes feel overwhelmed, uncertain, or ineffective. This is normal and human. What matters is how you respond:

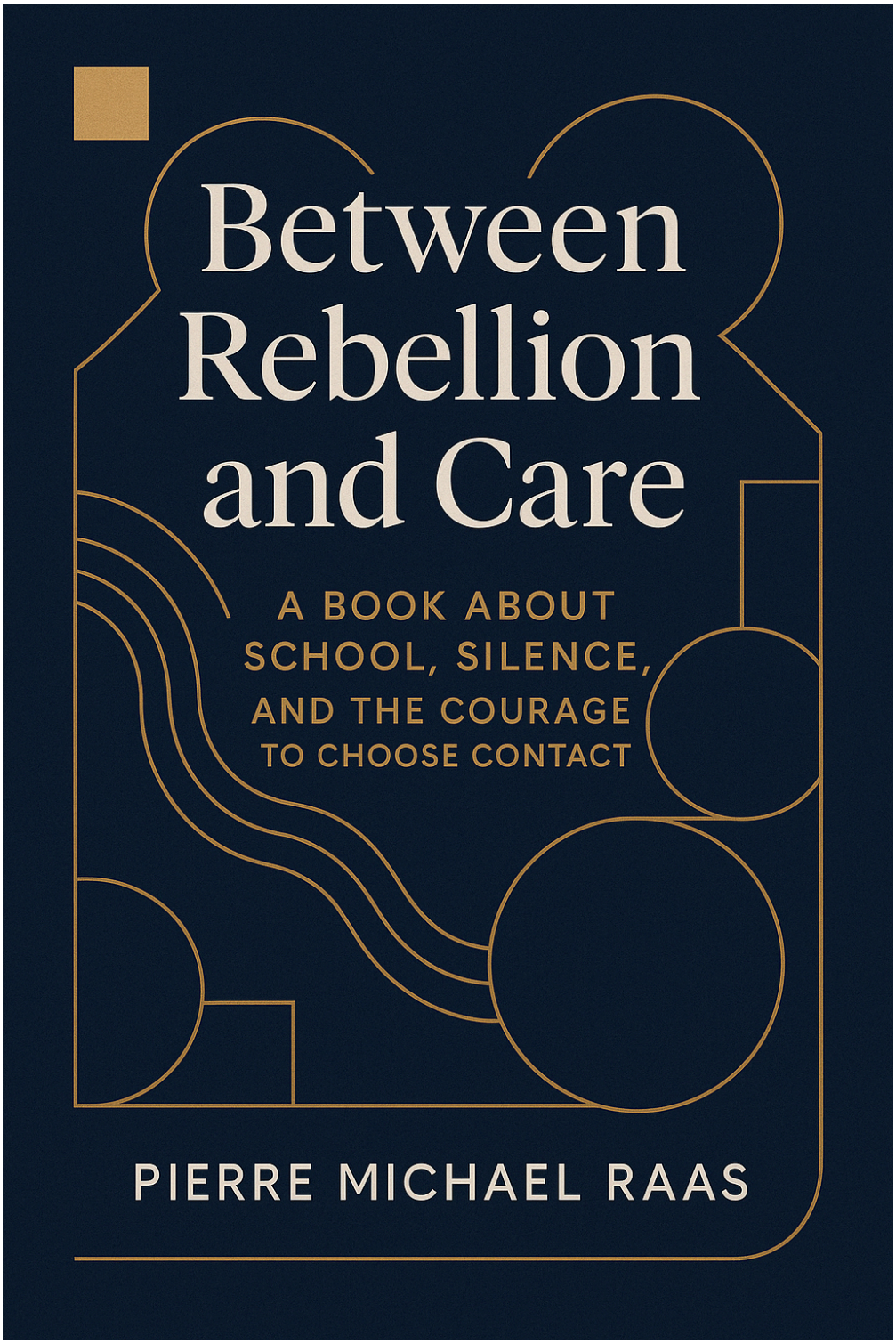
- **Seek support** from mentors, colleagues, or coaches

- **Take care of yourself** physically, emotionally, and spiritually
- **Remember your why** — the purpose that drives your work
- **Focus on small wins** rather than trying to change everything at once
- **Learn from failures** without being paralyzed by them

Reflection

- Where do you feel most powerful in your leadership? Most powerless?
- How do you maintain hope when facing seemingly insurmountable challenges?
- What would change if you focused more on influence than control?

Chapter 7 – The Courage for In-Between Spaces



The most important learning often happens in the spaces between — between classes, between activities, between the planned and the unexpected. These in-between

spaces require a different kind of courage: the courage to slow down, to be present, to let something emerge that wasn't on the schedule.

In our rush to cover curriculum and meet standards, we often overlook these liminal moments. But it is precisely in these spaces that relationships deepen, understanding develops, and transformation becomes possible.

What Are In-Between Spaces?

In-between spaces are:

- **The conversation that happens after class ends**
- **The moment when a student lingers at your desk**
- **The walk down the hallway between activities**
- **The pause before responding to a difficult question**
- **The silence that follows a powerful story**
- **The time when plans fall apart and something else emerges**

These spaces are characterized by openness, possibility, and the absence of predetermined outcomes.

Practice Story: The Hallway Encounter

Ms. Thompson was rushing between meetings when she noticed David sitting alone on the floor outside the counselor's office. Her first instinct was to keep walking — she was already late, and David wasn't her student.

But something made her stop.

"Hey David, how's it going?"

"Not great," he said quietly.

Instead of offering quick advice or hurrying on, Ms. Thompson sat down on the floor next to him.

"Want to tell me about it?"

For the next ten minutes, David shared his struggles with his parents' divorce, his falling grades, and his fear that no one cared about him.

Ms. Thompson didn't solve his problems, but she listened. And in that in-between space — neither in class nor in counseling, neither planned nor structured — something important happened.

David felt heard. And Ms. Thompson remembered why she became an educator.

Why We Avoid In-Between Spaces

Several things keep us from embracing these moments:

Time Pressure: We feel we don't have time for unplanned interactions.

Productivity Mindset: We value measurable outcomes over relationship building.

Fear of the Unknown: We're uncomfortable with situations we can't control.

Professional Boundaries: We worry about getting too involved or crossing lines.

System Expectations: We feel pressure to stick to schedules and plans.

The Courage Required

Embracing in-between spaces requires several kinds of courage:

The Courage to Slow Down: Resisting the pressure to rush from one thing to the next.

The Courage to Be Present: Giving full attention to what's happening right now.

The Courage to Not Know: Being comfortable with uncertainty and emergence.

The Courage to Be Human: Showing up authentically rather than just professionally.

The Courage to Trust: Believing that meaningful things can happen without planning.

Practice Story: The Disrupted Lesson

Mr. Garcia had carefully planned a lesson on the Revolutionary War when Maria burst into tears during the opening discussion.

His first instinct was to comfort her quickly and get back to the lesson. But something in her tears made him pause.

"Maria, what's happening for you right now?"

Through her tears, she shared that the discussion of revolution reminded her of the violence her family had fled in their home country.

Instead of returning to the planned lesson, Mr. Garcia invited the class into a conversation about different kinds of revolutions — political, personal, social. Students shared their own family stories of change and struggle.

The Revolutionary War still got covered, but in a way that connected to students' lived experiences and created deeper understanding.

Creating Conditions for In-Between Spaces

While these moments can't be planned, we can create conditions that make them more likely:

Build in Buffer Time: Don't pack schedules so tightly that there's no room for the unexpected.

Practice Presence: Develop the ability to be fully present in the moment.

Cultivate Curiosity: Approach interruptions and disruptions with interest rather than irritation.

Develop Emotional Intelligence: Learn to read the emotional climate and respond appropriately.

Trust the Process: Believe that meaningful learning can happen outside of formal lessons.

The Gifts of In-Between Spaces

When we embrace these moments, several things become possible:

Deeper Relationships: Students feel seen and known as whole people, not just learners.

Authentic Learning: Education connects to real life and personal experience.

Emotional Development: Students learn to process and express their feelings.

Community Building: Shared vulnerable moments create bonds between people.

Professional Renewal: Teachers remember why they chose education.

Practice Story: The Snow Day Conversation

When a sudden snowstorm closed school early, Mrs. Kim found herself with a small group of students waiting for late buses. Instead of having them sit quietly, she decided to use the time differently.

"What's the most beautiful thing you've ever seen?" she asked.

For the next hour, students shared stories of sunsets and grandmothers, of pets and places that mattered to them. They listened to each other in ways they never had before.

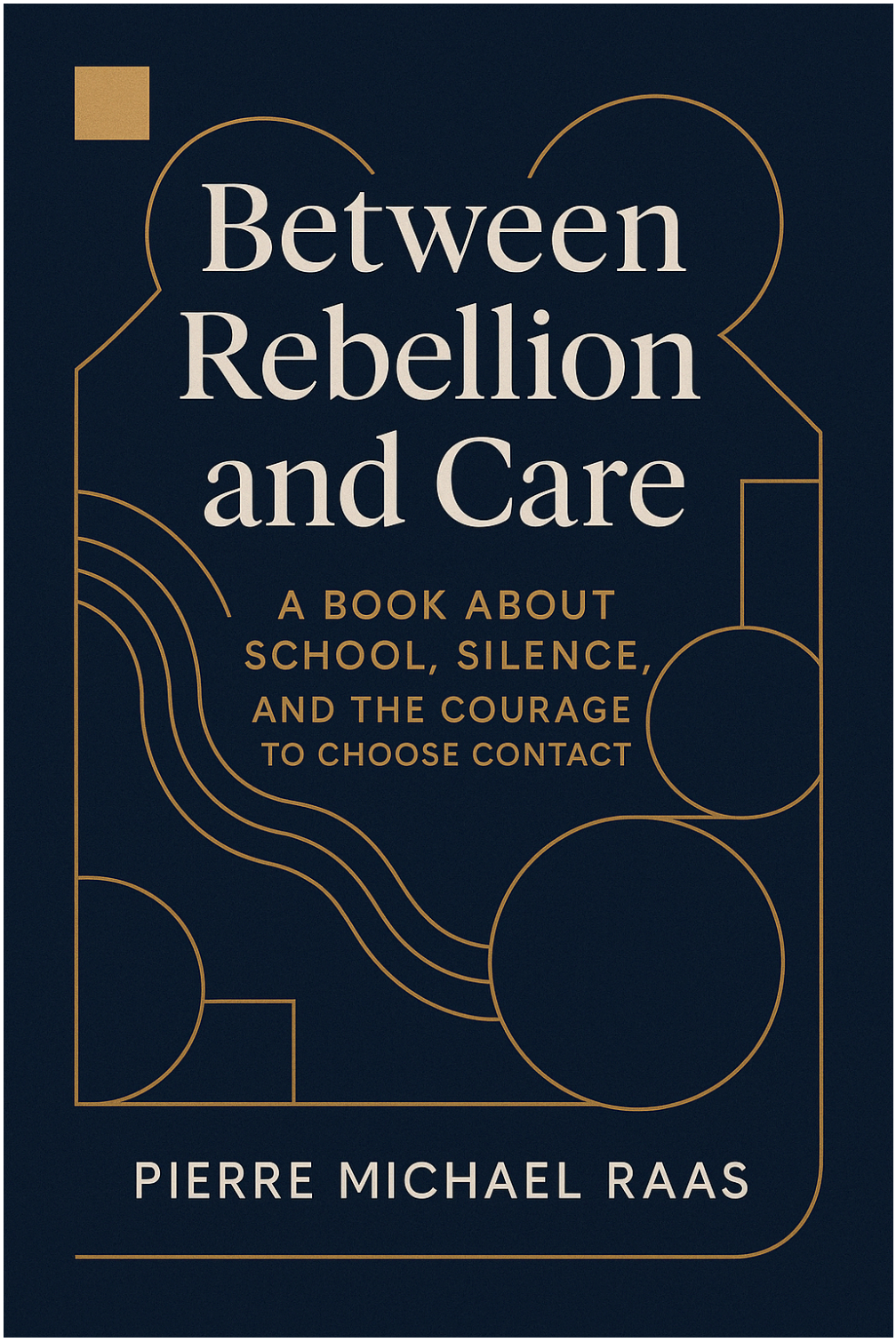
When the buses finally arrived, one student said, "This was the best part of school all year."

Mrs. Kim realized that sometimes the most important curriculum is the one that emerges in the spaces between.

Reflection

- When have you experienced meaningful in-between spaces in your work?
- What keeps you from slowing down and being present?
- How might you create more opportunities for emergence in your practice?

Chapter 8 – Professional Compassion



Compassion is not a luxury in education — it is a necessity. But professional compassion is different from personal sympathy. It requires skill, boundaries, and the ability to care deeply without being consumed by that care.

Professional compassion is the ability to see and respond to suffering while maintaining the emotional regulation and clear thinking necessary to be helpful. It is empathy with wisdom, care with sustainability.

What Professional Compassion Is Not

Professional compassion is not:

- **Feeling sorry for students**
- **Taking on their problems as your own**
- **Trying to rescue or save everyone**
- **Ignoring your own needs and boundaries**
- **Being permissive or avoiding accountability**

These approaches, while well-intentioned, often lead to burnout and ineffectiveness.

What Professional Compassion Is

Professional compassion involves:

- **Seeing students' full humanity** — their strengths, struggles, and potential
- **Responding to needs with appropriate action** — not just emotion
- **Maintaining emotional regulation** — staying calm in crisis
- **Setting clear boundaries** — knowing what you can and cannot do
- **Seeking support** — recognizing when you need help

Practice Story: The Student in Crisis

When 16-year-old Alex came to school with bruises and refused to talk about them, his teacher Ms. Rodriguez felt her heart break. Her first instinct was to take Alex home with her, to protect him from whatever was happening.

But professional compassion required a different response.

She documented what she observed, reported to the appropriate authorities, and made sure Alex knew she cared about his safety. She also connected him with the school counselor and checked in with him regularly.

When Alex was eventually placed in foster care, Ms. Rodriguez continued to be a stable, caring presence in his life — not as a savior, but as a professional who cared enough to respond appropriately.

The Components of Professional Compassion

Awareness: The ability to notice when students are struggling, even when they try to hide it.

Understanding: Recognizing that behavior often communicates unmet needs or unhealed wounds.

Response: Taking appropriate action based on your role and the student's needs.

Boundaries: Knowing the limits of your responsibility and capability.

Self-Care: Maintaining your own well-being so you can continue to care for others.

Practice Story: The Overwhelmed Teacher

Mrs. Patterson taught in a high-poverty school where many of her students faced trauma, hunger, and instability. She started staying late every day, spending her own money on supplies and food, and losing sleep worrying about her students.

By October, she was exhausted and resentful. She snapped at students, called in sick frequently, and considered leaving teaching altogether.

It wasn't until she attended a workshop on professional compassion that she realized her approach was unsustainable. She learned to:

- Set clear boundaries around time and money
- Connect families with community resources rather than trying to provide everything herself
- Practice self-care as a professional responsibility
- Seek support from colleagues and supervisors

Her care for students didn't diminish, but it became more sustainable and ultimately more effective.

The Paradox of Boundaries

Many educators worry that setting boundaries means caring less. But the opposite is true. Boundaries allow us to care more effectively and sustainably.

Boundaries help us: - **Maintain perspective** when emotions run high - **Make better decisions** based on what's best for students, not just what feels good - **Sustain our work** over time without burning out - **Model healthy relationships** for students - **Access support** when we need it

Developing Professional Compassion

Professional compassion can be developed through:

Training: Learning about trauma, child development, and effective helping strategies.

Practice: Gaining experience in responding to student needs appropriately.

Reflection: Regularly examining your responses and their effectiveness.

Support: Working with colleagues, supervisors, and mental health professionals.

Self-Care: Maintaining your own physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

When Compassion Becomes Complicated

Sometimes professional compassion becomes challenging:

When students remind us of ourselves and we over-identify with their struggles.

When we feel helpless in the face of overwhelming need.

When systems fail and we feel pressure to fill the gaps.

When we're criticized for caring "too much" or "not enough."

When we experience secondary trauma from hearing about students' experiences.

In these situations, seeking support and consultation is not a sign of weakness — it's a professional responsibility.

The Impact of Professional Compassion

When educators practice professional compassion:

Students benefit from feeling seen, understood, and supported.

Families feel that their children are in caring hands.

Colleagues model healthy ways of caring for others.

Communities develop trust in their schools.

Educators find meaning and sustainability in their work.

Voices from Practice

"I learned that caring for my students means caring for myself too." — Elementary teacher

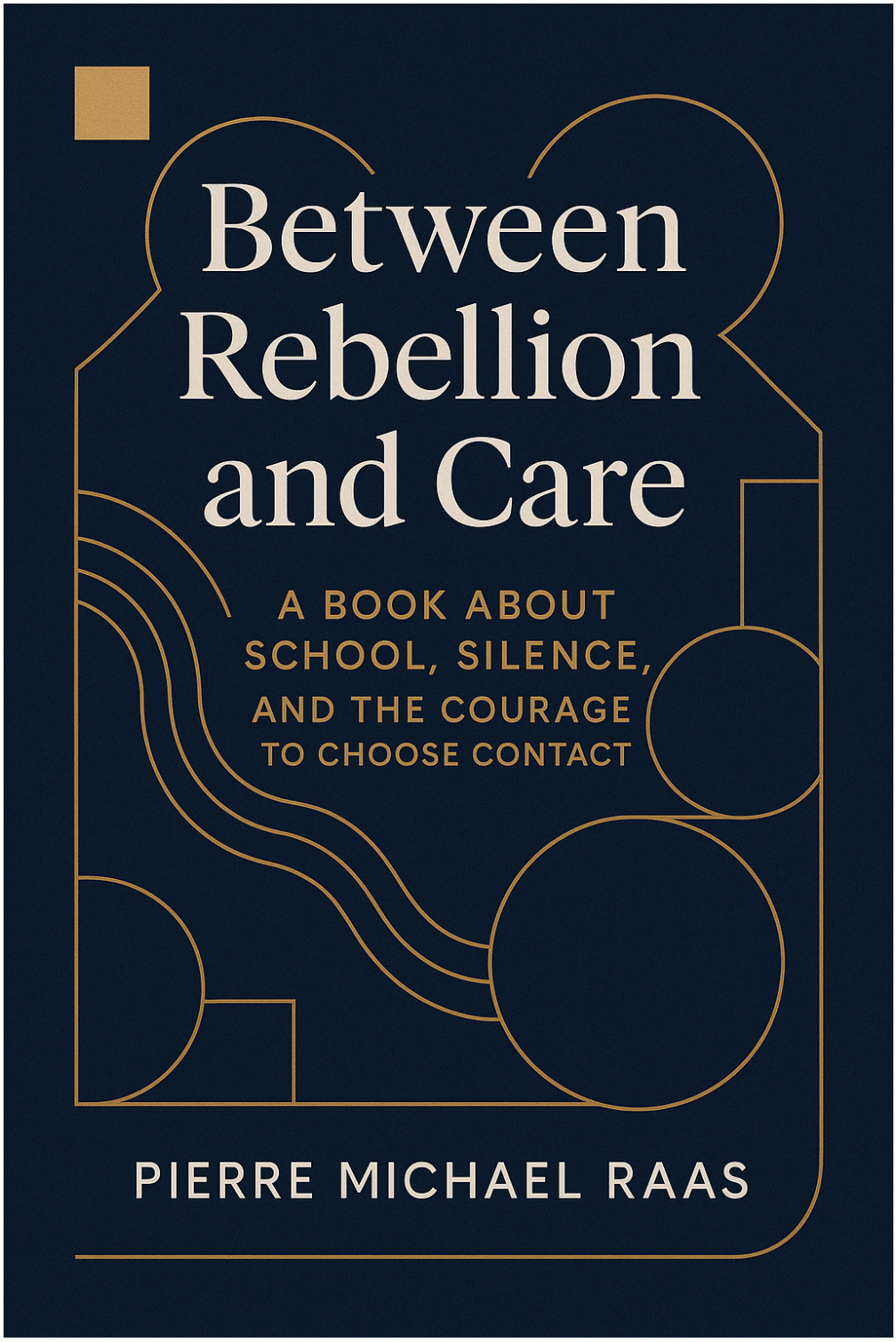
"The most compassionate thing I can do is maintain my boundaries." — School counselor

"Professional compassion isn't about feeling everything — it's about responding wisely." — High school principal

Reflection

- How do you balance caring deeply with maintaining professional boundaries?
- When have you experienced compassion fatigue, and what helped you recover?
- What support do you need to practice sustainable compassion?

Chapter 9 – Schedule or Conversation?



Every day, educators face a fundamental choice: follow the schedule or follow the conversation. Cover the curriculum or cover the child. Meet the timeline or meet the need.

This is not a choice between responsibility and care, between professionalism and relationship. It is a choice about what we prioritize when these important values come into tension.

The Tyranny of the Schedule

Modern education is dominated by schedules:

- **Bell schedules** that fragment learning into artificial chunks
- **Curriculum pacing guides** that prioritize coverage over understanding
- **Testing calendars** that drive instruction toward narrow outcomes
- **Meeting schedules** that leave little time for reflection
- **Data collection timelines** that focus on measurement over meaning

While structure is necessary, when schedule becomes master rather than servant, learning suffers.

Practice Story: The Interrupted Lesson

Mr. Johnson was teaching a lesson on fractions when Sarah raised her hand.

"My dad moved out last night," she said quietly. "I can't think about math right now."

Mr. Johnson faced a choice. He could acknowledge Sarah's pain briefly and return to fractions, staying on schedule. Or he could set aside the lesson and create space for what was really happening in the room.

He chose conversation.

"Sarah, thank you for trusting us with that. That must be really hard."

He invited the class to share what helps them when they're going through difficult times. Students talked about friends, pets, music, and family. They shared strategies for coping with big emotions.

The fractions lesson never happened that day. But something more important did: a community came together to support one of its members.

The False Choice

Often, we're presented with schedule versus conversation as an either/or choice. But this is a false dichotomy. The real question is: How do we create structures that serve learning rather than constrain it?

Rigid Scheduling Problems: - Ignores the natural rhythms of learning - Fragments knowledge into disconnected pieces - Prioritizes coverage over depth - Leaves no room for emergence or discovery - Creates stress and anxiety for both teachers and students

Conversation-Driven Learning Benefits: - Follows students' interests and questions - Allows for deep exploration of topics - Integrates social-emotional and academic learning - Builds relationships and community - Develops critical thinking and communication skills

Finding the Balance

Effective educators learn to hold both structure and flexibility:

Use Schedule as Framework, Not Prison: Have a plan, but be willing to adapt when something more important emerges.

Build in Buffer Time: Don't pack every minute so tightly that there's no room for the unexpected.

Prioritize Essential Learning: Focus on what matters most rather than trying to cover everything.

Integrate Social-Emotional Learning: Address students' emotional needs as part of academic instruction, not separate from it.

Trust the Process: Believe that meaningful conversations often lead to deeper learning than scripted lessons.

Practice Story: The Flexible Framework

Ms. Chen taught 4th grade in a school with strict pacing guides. But she learned to work within the system while still prioritizing her students' needs.

She started each day with a "community circle" where students could share what was on their minds. Sometimes these conversations connected naturally to the planned curriculum. Other times, they revealed needs that required attention before learning could happen.

When standardized test prep consumed the schedule, she found ways to make it meaningful by connecting practice problems to real-world situations her students cared about.

She met her district requirements while still honoring her students' humanity.

The Courage to Choose Conversation

Sometimes, choosing conversation over schedule requires courage:

Professional Risk: Administrators or colleagues might question your priorities.

Accountability Pressure: Test scores and data might not immediately reflect the value of relationship-building.

Time Anxiety: You might worry about "falling behind" or not covering required content.

Perfectionism: You might feel pressure to have everything planned and controlled.

But educators who consistently choose conversation when it matters most often find that:

- Students are more engaged and motivated
- Learning becomes more meaningful and memorable
- Classroom community grows stronger
- Academic outcomes improve over time
- Professional satisfaction increases

When Schedule Serves Learning

Structure isn't the enemy of meaningful education. Good schedules:

- **Provide predictability** that helps students feel safe
- **Create rhythms** that support different types of learning
- **Ensure equity** by guaranteeing all students access to important content
- **Support planning** that leads to coherent, connected learning experiences
- **Protect time** for both academic and social-emotional development

The key is making sure schedule serves learning, not the other way around.

Practice Story: The Responsive Curriculum

At Roosevelt Elementary, teachers noticed that their rigid math curriculum wasn't working for many students. Instead of abandoning structure entirely, they redesigned their approach.

They kept the essential learning objectives but created flexible pathways for reaching them. When students struggled with a concept, teachers slowed down and provided more support. When students mastered material quickly, they moved on to more challenging work.

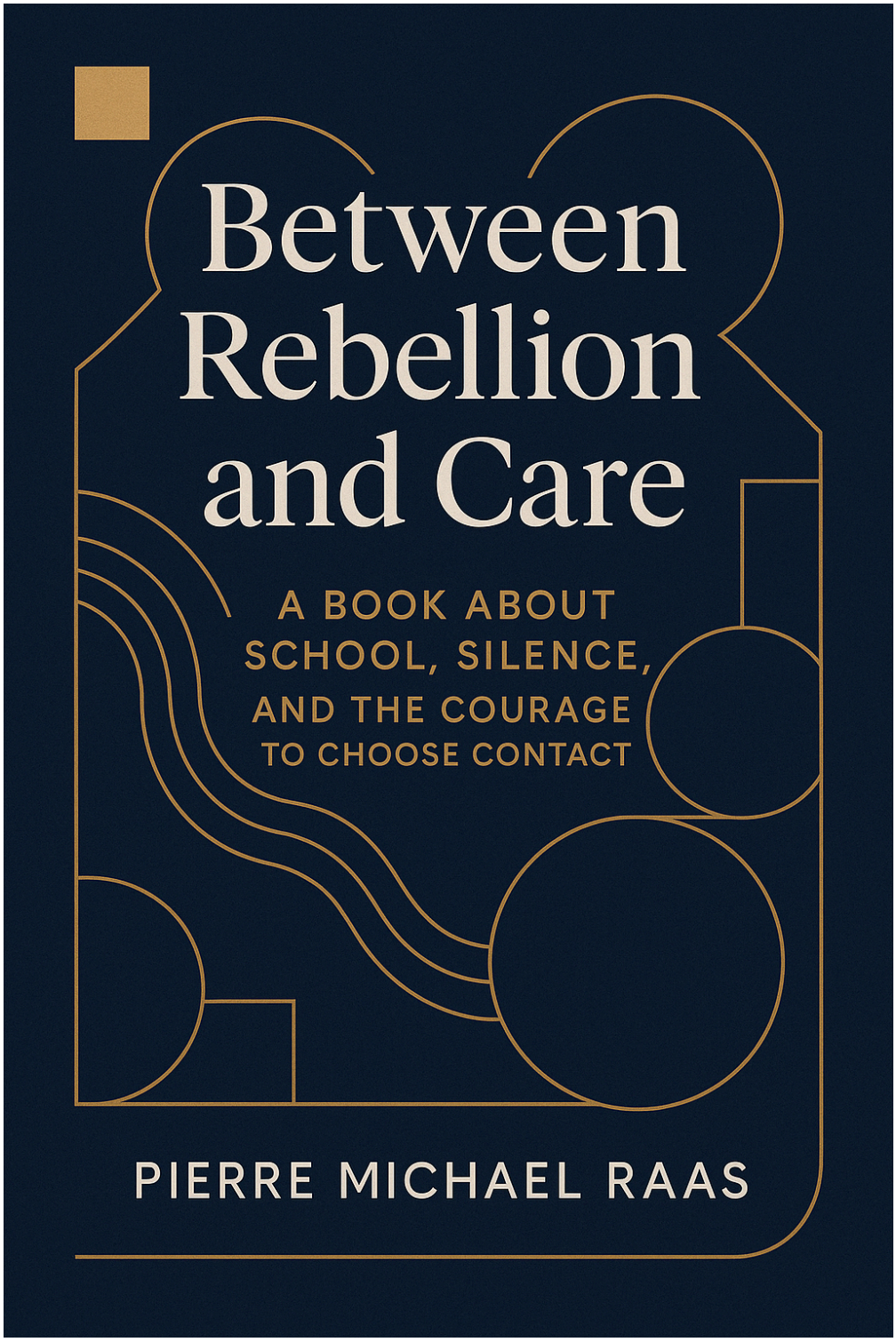
They also integrated math with other subjects and connected it to students' interests and experiences.

Test scores improved, but more importantly, students began to see themselves as mathematicians.

Reflection

- When have you chosen conversation over schedule? What happened?
- How do you balance structure with flexibility in your practice?
- What would change if you trusted conversation as much as curriculum?

Chapter 10 – When Children Speak First



There is a difference between letting children speak and letting children speak first. When children speak first, they set the agenda. They determine what matters. They lead the conversation.

This requires a fundamental shift in how we think about education: from adults delivering knowledge to children, to learning emerging from the intersection of adult wisdom and child experience.

The Power of Going First

When children speak first:

- **Their voices shape the direction** of learning
- **Their questions become the curriculum**
- **Their experiences provide the context** for understanding
- **Their needs determine the pace** of instruction
- **Their interests drive engagement**

This doesn't mean abandoning adult responsibility or expertise. It means using that expertise in service of what children bring to the learning relationship.

Practice Story: The Morning That Changed Everything

Mrs. Williams always started her 3rd grade class with a review of the day's schedule. But one Monday morning, before she could begin, Marcus raised his hand.

"Mrs. Williams, my grandma died this weekend, and I don't understand why people have to die."

Mrs. Williams faced a choice. She could acknowledge Marcus's loss briefly and move on to the planned lesson, or she could let his question lead.

She chose to follow Marcus.

"Marcus, I'm so sorry about your grandma. That's a really important question. What do the rest of you think about that?"

What followed was a profound conversation about life, death, memory, and love. Students shared their own experiences with loss, asked deep questions, and supported each other.

The planned math lesson never happened, but learning did. Deep, meaningful learning about what it means to be human.

Why We Resist Child-Led Learning

Several things keep us from letting children speak first:

Curriculum Pressure: We feel obligated to cover specific content in specific timeframes.

Control Anxiety: We worry about losing control of the classroom or the learning process.

Assessment Concerns: We fear that following children's interests won't prepare them for tests.

Professional Expectations: We believe good teachers have everything planned and under control.

Time Constraints: We feel there isn't enough time for both child-led and adult-directed learning.

The Courage to Follow

Letting children speak first requires several kinds of courage:

The Courage to Not Know: Being comfortable with uncertainty about where the conversation will lead.

The Courage to Trust: Believing that children's questions and interests are worthy of exploration.

The Courage to Be Flexible: Adapting plans based on what emerges in the moment.

The Courage to Be Human: Showing up authentically rather than just as an authority figure.

Practice Story: The Science Question

During a unit on weather, 5th grader Emma asked, "Why do some people not have houses when it storms?"

Mr. Rodriguez could have said, "That's not about weather, Emma. Let's stay focused on our lesson."

Instead, he said, "That's a really important question, Emma. What do you think?"

The conversation that followed integrated science (weather patterns), social studies (housing and poverty), math (statistics about homelessness), and language arts (reading news articles and writing letters to local officials).

Students learned more about weather than they would have from the textbook, but they also learned about justice, compassion, and their power to make a difference.

Creating Space for Student Voice

Making room for children to speak first requires intentional changes:

Start with Questions: Begin lessons by asking what students wonder about rather than telling them what they'll learn.

Follow Their Interests: When students show curiosity about something, explore it together.

Value Their Experiences: Use students' lives and backgrounds as curriculum resources.

Slow Down: Build in time for deep exploration rather than rushing through content.

Share Power: Let students help make decisions about what and how they learn.

The Academic Benefits

When children speak first, academic learning often improves:

Engagement Increases: Students are more motivated when learning connects to their interests and questions.

Understanding Deepens: When students help construct knowledge, they understand it more thoroughly.

Critical Thinking Develops: Following questions teaches students to think, not just memorize.

Communication Skills Grow: Students practice expressing ideas and listening to others.

Ownership Emerges: Students take responsibility for their own learning.

Practice Story: The History Debate

During a unit on the American Revolution, 8th grader Jamal said, "This sounds just like what's happening in my neighborhood. People fighting against unfair treatment."

Instead of correcting him or redirecting to the textbook, Ms. Johnson said, "Tell us more about that, Jamal."

Jamal shared his observations about community organizing in response to police violence. Other students connected the Revolution to their own experiences with authority and justice.

The class spent the next week comparing historical and contemporary struggles for freedom, reading primary sources from both eras, and discussing the complexities of resistance and change.

Students learned more about the Revolution than they ever had before, but they also learned to see themselves as part of ongoing struggles for justice.

When Children's Voices Challenge Us

Sometimes what children say makes us uncomfortable:

- They ask questions we don't know how to answer
- They share experiences that break our hearts
- They challenge our assumptions and beliefs
- They point out injustices we'd rather ignore
- They express needs we don't know how to meet

These moments are opportunities for growth — both theirs and ours.

The Teacher's Role

When children speak first, teachers don't become passive. Instead, they:

- **Listen deeply** to understand what students are really saying
- **Ask questions** that help students think more deeply
- **Provide resources** to support student inquiry
- **Connect experiences** to broader learning goals
- **Facilitate discussions** that include all voices
- **Document learning** that emerges from student interests

Voices from Students

"I like it when my teacher asks what I think before telling me what to think." — 4th grader

"The best classes are when we get to talk about stuff that matters to us." — 7th grader

"I feel smart when my questions become the lesson." — 10th grader

The Ripple Effects

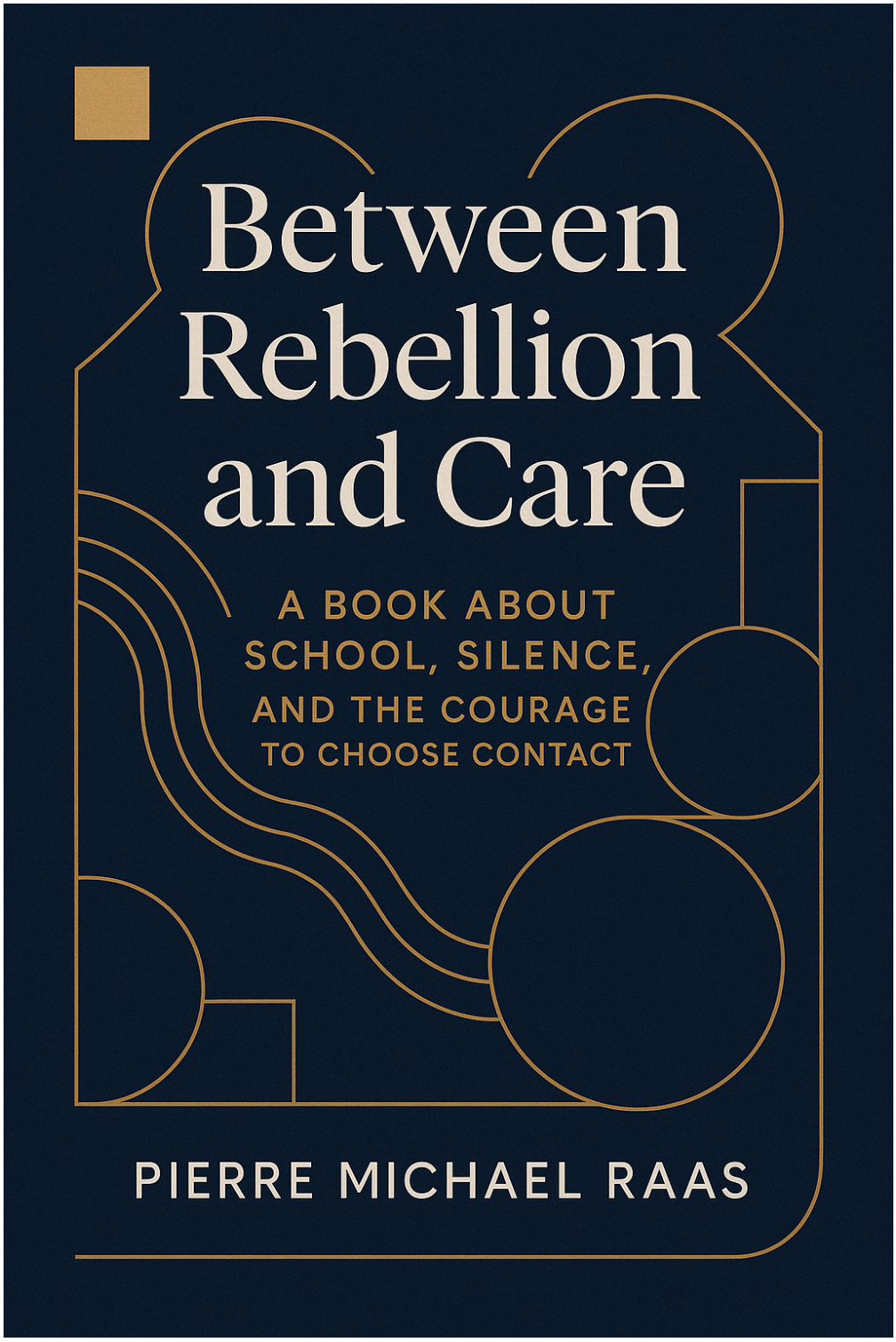
When children regularly speak first:

- They develop confidence in their own thinking
- They learn to value their own experiences
- They become more engaged in learning
- They develop stronger relationships with teachers and peers
- They see school as relevant to their lives

Reflection

- When have you let a student's question or comment redirect your teaching?
- What keeps you from following children's interests more often?
- How might your classroom change if students spoke first more regularly?

Chapter 11 – System Failures and Silence



Sometimes it's not the human who fails. It's the system. And the silence around it becomes the greatest failure.

School has language for most things. For student plans, goal management, well-being, inclusion. It has procedures, follow-up mechanisms, and guidelines. But when the system itself doesn't work, the language becomes strange. There's talk in phrases like:

"It's difficult right now." "We must do the best we can." "There's pressure on resources." "We're awaiting clarification."

But what does it actually mean?

Behind the phrases hides something heavy: A system that fails — not due to lack of will, but due to its own construction. And a silence that preserves calm while someone falls.

Practice Story: "It Has Become Too Late"

A teacher tells about a student in distress:
"He has been in alarm state for over four months. There's unrest, absence, conflicts. But we lack documentation for § 54. We can't get help yet."

PPR refers to administration. Leadership refers to guidelines. The system refers to further system. No one dares say: *"This doesn't work."*

The teacher says:
"We're not waiting for support. We're waiting for deterioration."

And the child stands in the middle of it — without explanation.

The system does nothing. But it also makes no mistakes. Because the system says nothing at all.

Why Do System Failures Occur?

System failures happen when:

- **Documentation weighs more than relationship**
- **Structure displaces reality**
- **Resources are prioritized based on flat criteria**
- **Responsiveness is reduced to administrative phrases**
- **Decisions are made without presence**

No one wishes harm. But harm happens when no one will take responsibility for seeing it.

The Faces of Silence

We say:

- *"We're working on the case."*
- *"There's something happening."*
- *"It's complicated."*
- *"Unfortunately there's no solution yet."*

But behind the phrases lies an absence of movement. An absence of courage. An absence of clarity.

A school principal said:
"We've learned to talk without saying anything."

Voices from Practice

"I know exactly what the child needs. But I'm not allowed to write it down yet." – Teacher, 38 years

"We register everything — but we don't act." – PPR psychologist

"When visitors come from administration, we're told not to mention distress." – School principal

"I cover for a system that doesn't work. And I no longer know why." – AKT advisor

The System's Defense Mechanisms

The system protects itself through:

- **Case procedures**
- **Quantitative data basis**
- **Decision hierarchies**
- **Linguistic distances**
- **Time postponement as mechanism**

It sounds like neutral operation. But it becomes:

- **Silence**
- **Emptiness**
- **Postponement of responsibility**

And children sense it first.

Practice Story: A Silent Referral

A pedagogue had worked with a student for over a year. Intense conversations, conflict management, support. The student showed signs of stress. She made a referral. It came back:

"Quantitative basis is missing."

She said:
"But we have reality."

The answer:
"There's no systemic coverage for that reality."

The silence wasn't chosen. It was given — by the structure.

Professional Dilemma: Knowing But Not Being Able

The most painful thing in the profession is not lacking knowledge. It's knowing something important — and not being able to act.

Teachers, pedagogues, leaders, and psychologists stand with:

- **Insight into the child's condition**
- **Reflection on pedagogical direction**
- **Professional solutions**

But they're held back by:

- **Resources**
- **System logic**
- **Tempo**
- **Documentation requirements**

And when voices are blocked, it doesn't just become a system failure. It becomes professional grief.

When Silence Becomes Part of Culture

Professionals learn to:

- **Talk without meaning anything**
- **Register without believing in action**
- **Listen to system messages** — not to children

And culture forms around it:

- **One avoids conversations that hurt**
- **One writes what the system likes**
- **One refrains from asking when the answer can't be used**

We didn't create the silence. But we've learned to live with it. And that's what we must break.

Micro-Disruptions – What Actually Works

There are actions that work — in small ways:

- **A teacher who writes an extra note**
- **A pedagogue who gathers colleagues for reflection**
- **A leader who says: "we don't move forward until we've cleaned up our language"**
- **A psychologist who refuses to approve a standard procedure** — and asks for a meeting

These actions don't create revolution. But they question the silence.

A School That Chose Language

A medium-sized school in a pressured municipality said:
"We dare to say what can't be documented."

They made a 'voice report' — written by professionals, with feelings, concerns, and reflection. Not numbers. Not statistics. It was sent to administration as a 'non-professional supplement'.

The response wasn't help. But it was recognition. A process was set in motion. Not with Excel — but with contact.

The Institutional Trap

Systems often create their own logic that becomes disconnected from the human realities they're meant to serve:

Bureaucratic Momentum: Procedures that exist to serve other procedures rather than people.

Risk Aversion: Policies designed to prevent problems that end up creating new ones.

Measurement Obsession: Focus on what can be counted rather than what counts.

Accountability Theater: Processes that create the appearance of responsibility without actual responsiveness.

Communication Breakdown: Information that flows up and down hierarchies but never reaches the people who need it.

Breaking the Cycle

Creating change requires:

Courage to Name: Calling system failures what they are rather than using euphemisms.

Documentation of Impact: Recording not just compliance but human consequences.

Coalition Building: Finding others who share concerns and are willing to speak up.

Alternative Channels: Creating informal networks when formal ones fail.

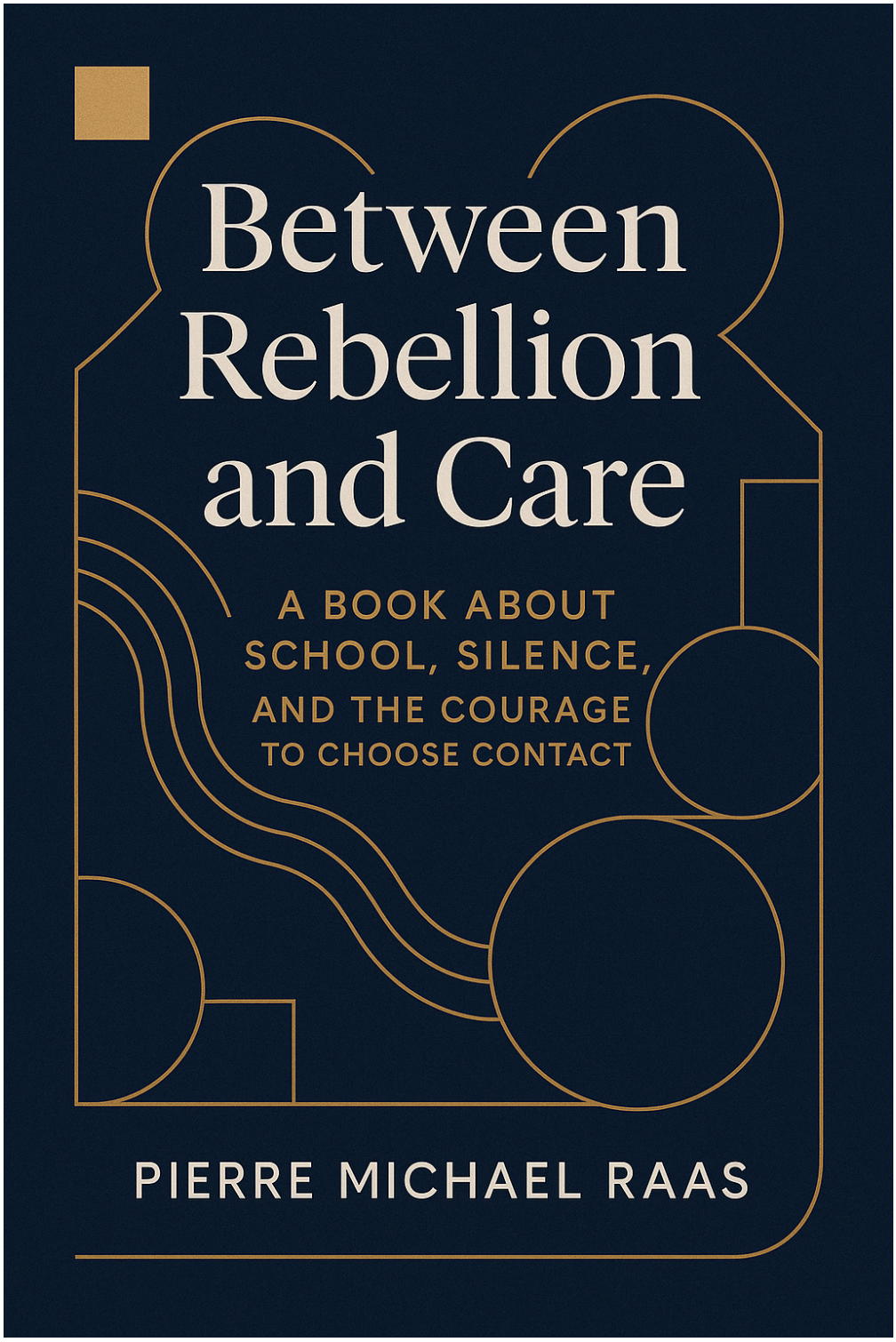
Persistent Advocacy: Continuing to raise issues even when initial responses are dismissive.

Reflection

- What system failures have you seen — and have you said them aloud?
- What silence have you contributed to — and how would you formulate it differently?

- How can you create micro-disruptions — in culture, practice, or structure?

Chapter 12 – The Price of Silence



There are words we choose not to say. And sometimes we carry them so long that they begin to hurt. Not just inside. But between us.

School is not only filled with sounds, voices, rhythms, and messages. It's also filled with silence. With what we don't get to say. With what is felt but never spoken aloud.

Silence appears in all spaces: between colleagues, in meetings, in teaching, in recess. And while we do our work, we can sometimes forget that this silence has a price.

Not because we want to harm. But because we've learned that silence is more professional than vulnerability.

We don't say what we actually think. We don't ask, even though we see something. We refrain from speaking — out of consideration, fatigue, fear.

But silence costs. And that bill is rarely paid by those who choose it.

What is Silence?

Silence is not absence of words. It's an active choice not to speak.

It can be:

- **A protection against emotional exposure**
- **A strategy to maintain function**
- **An avoidance of conflicts**
- **A closedness in culture and atmosphere**
- **A way to survive**

But it becomes a price when it prevents us from acting, contacting, acknowledging, supporting, asking.

Practice Story: A Teacher Who Didn't Say It

She had experienced increasing frustration, emotional fatigue, and a feeling of not doing enough for two years. But in team meetings she said:

"It's going. I just need to get through the week."

She later wrote in her diary:
"I don't think they know who I am anymore. Maybe I don't know either."

When she finally said it aloud, chaos didn't arise. Connection arose.

The price of silence had been loneliness — disguised as function.

Practice Story: A Pedagogue Who Avoided the Important

He worked with a student who repeatedly withdrew, isolated himself, and began rejecting contact. He thought: *"This goes deeper."* But said to his colleagues:

"It's probably just a phase."

He refrained from writing observations, for fear of "pointing too much."

Months later it came out: The child had experienced violence at home.

He said:
"I didn't want to expose the child. But I exposed it in silence."

Voices from Practice

"I wanted to talk about it – but I thought it didn't fit in." – Teacher, 42 years

"We have a good culture – so why does it feel like we never talk about the difficult?" – Pedagogue

"We remain silent because we think we're protecting others. But we become more alone ourselves." – School principal

"Sometimes silence isn't calm. It's the absence of care." – AKT advisor

When Silence is Professionalism

We learn that the professional:

- **Is calm**
- **Avoids emotional outbursts**
- **Focuses on the task**
- **Keeps private feelings back**
- **Doesn't burden the community**

But when this becomes the norm, we lose the relational:

- **We don't ask**

- **We don't share**
- **We listen with reservations**
- **We interrupt what could become authenticity**

The price of silence becomes the absence of trust.

Why Do We Avoid the Difficult?

We remain silent because we:

- **Fear appearing weak**
- **Don't have tools for emotional conversation**
- **Want to protect ourselves or others**
- **Judge that it's not 'professionally relevant'**
- **Are afraid of consequences**

But that doesn't mean the difficult doesn't exist. It just means it's not met.

The Form of Silence in School

It arises when:

- **A student shows signs of distress** — and we say *"maybe it's just a bit of unrest"*
- **A colleague seems depressed** — but we say *"you seem tired"*
- **A leader avoids difficult topics** — and we choose to 'follow the agenda'
- **A decision feels wrong** — but we don't talk about the consequence

These moments seem small. But they shape culture.

What Could Have Happened?

- If we had said: *"I think he seems more restless than before. Should we talk about it?"*
- If we had asked: *"How are you really — not just as a professional, but as you?"*
- If we had said: *"This decision doesn't feel right. Can we talk about why?"*
- If we had dared to say: *"I don't understand this. Can you help me?"*

These conversations don't guarantee solutions. But they guarantee contact.

The Cumulative Effect

Silence accumulates over time:

Individual Level: People become isolated, disconnected from their authentic selves and others.

Relational Level: Trust erodes as people learn they cannot speak honestly about their experiences.

Organizational Level: Problems persist and worsen because they are not addressed openly.

Cultural Level: Silence becomes normalized, making it even harder to break.

The Hidden Costs

The price of silence includes:

Missed Opportunities: Chances to help, connect, or solve problems that are lost.

Increased Suffering: Problems that could be addressed early become more severe.

Eroded Trust: Relationships that become superficial and disconnected.

Professional Burnout: The exhaustion that comes from carrying unspoken burdens.

Student Impact: Children who learn that their voices don't matter or that adults can't be trusted with difficult truths.

Breaking the Silence

Creating space for authentic communication requires:

Permission: Explicit acknowledgment that difficult conversations are not only acceptable but necessary.

Skills: Training in how to have challenging conversations constructively.

Safety: Assurance that speaking up won't result in punishment or rejection.

Modeling: Leaders and colleagues who demonstrate vulnerability and authenticity.

Structure: Regular opportunities for reflection and honest dialogue.

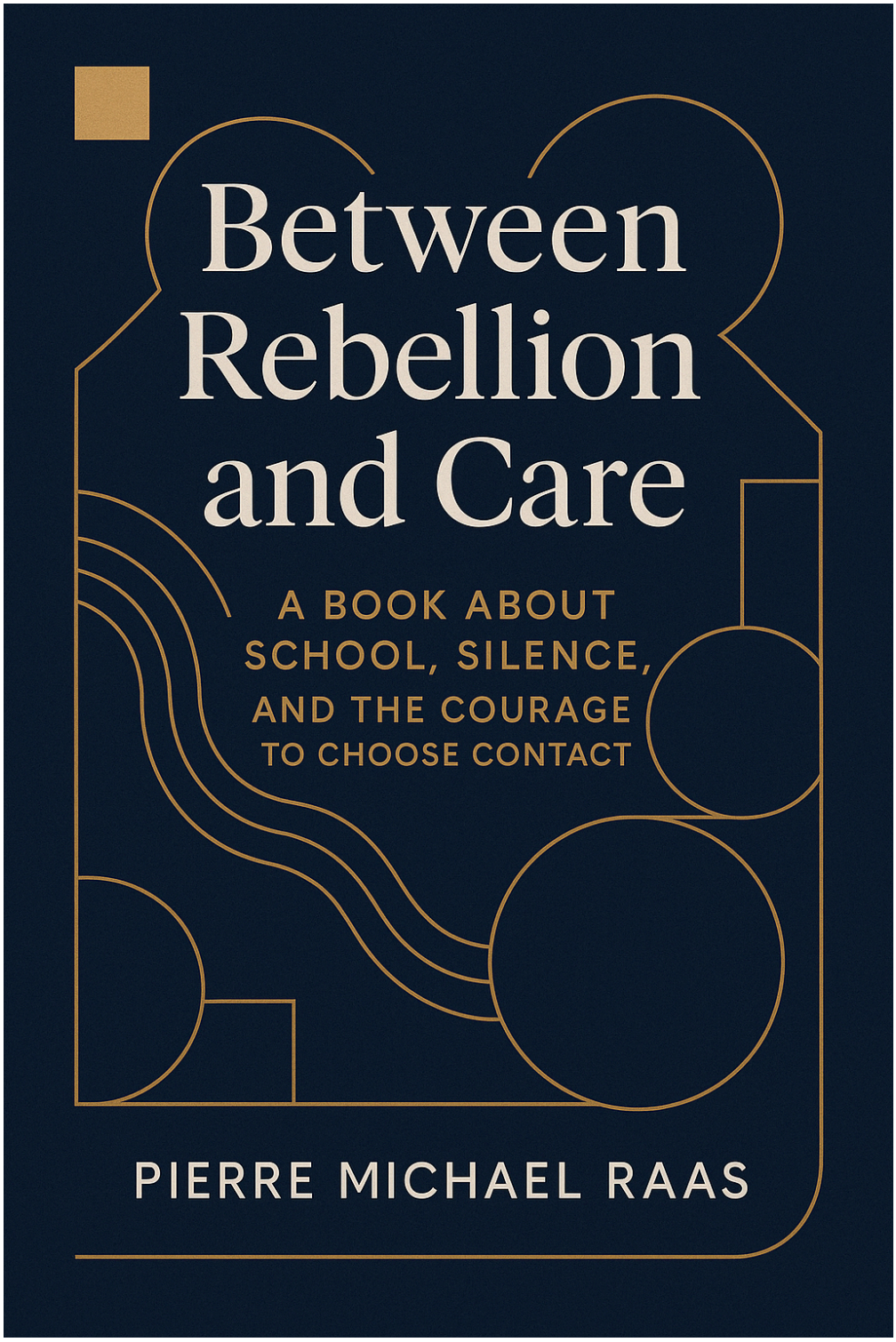
The Courage to Speak

Breaking silence requires courage, but it also creates courage. When one person finds the voice to speak about what has been unspoken, it often gives others permission to do the same.

Reflection

- What silence are you carrying, and what is it costing you?
- When have you chosen silence over truth, and what were the consequences?
- How might your relationships change if you found the courage to speak more authentically?

Chapter 13 – What We Choose to Look Away From



Not everything is overlooked by accident. Some things are chosen away. Not because we are evil — but because we are tired, afraid, or accustomed to ignoring the difficult.

We are good at seeing much. We scan, assess, adjust, register, act. The professional is an observer with an eye for well-being, participation, and academic development. But some things we see — and choose to look away from. It's not the same as not seeing them. It's an active avoidance. A micro-choice. A silent control.

We see unrest — but say, "there's probably just a bit of energy." We see withdrawal — but say, "he's just quiet." We see collegial breakdown — but say, "it'll probably pass." We see skewed relationships — but say, "we don't interfere."

And while we say all that, something happens: What we choose away continues. It becomes culture. And part of our practice.

A Pedagogue Who Saw — And Said Nothing

She saw a student in recess who always walked alone. Not by choice — but by habit. He was rarely invited. Didn't go over. Didn't talk much. She said to herself:

"If I say something, I'll disturb something important. Maybe it would be stigmatizing."

She refrained from acting. Three months later the student said:
"No one knows I've never had a friend here."

She cried. Not from guilt. But from grief. For she had seen. She just chose not to do anything.

Why Do We Look Away?

It happens when:

- We're afraid of doing something wrong
- We don't have clear support
- We don't know how to formulate it
- We've become accustomed to "that's not how we do things here"
- We fear that insight will create unmanageability

But it doesn't mean the problem disappears. It just means we don't participate in the solution.

A Teacher in a Class with Hidden Distress

She experienced low participation, fatigue, increased conflict level. But she was new. Didn't want to create a stir. She thought: *"I don't have data. Only a feeling."*

She chose to follow the annual plan. At term end, well-being measurement showed: markedly worsened score.

She said:
"I knew it. But I didn't have permission to act on it."

So she looked away. Out of professionalism. And that's precisely why it hurt.

Voices from Practice

"I see far too much — and I choose away, to not break down." – Pedagogue, 41 years

"We avoid the difficult. And we call it professional calm." – Teacher, 52 years

"I've written in my notebook for a year. But I haven't said any of it aloud." – AKT advisor

"We're good at talking about what we want. But not about what we see." – School principal

What We Overlook — And What It Costs

When we look away, there happens:

- **Children who don't get help**
- **Colleagues who become more silent**
- **Practice that becomes less shared**
- **Culture that gets used to the unacceptable**
- **Ethical wear**

It's not about mistakes. It's about denial — and the price that follows.

The Dilemma: When Is It My Responsibility?

Professionals ask themselves:

- Should I say something if I only have a feeling?
- What happens if I'm wrong?
- Can I allow myself to assess something without context?
- Who protects me if I open something difficult?

These aren't easy questions. But the most important thing isn't being certain. The most important thing is being willing to take the risk for contact.

A Leader Who Refused to Look Away

She received inquiries about unrest, absence, and collegial fatigue. No one asked for action. Only understanding. She chose not to wait for proof.

She said in a meeting:
"We see something. And we don't talk about it. That stops now."

There came resistance. Defense. Silence. But also tears. Relief. Authenticity. She said:

"I don't know what we do. But I know we shouldn't refrain."

And culture began to move. Not because someone had the solution. But because someone refused to look away.

What Does It Require to See — And Say?

It requires:

- **Inner permission**
- **Colleagues who tolerate mistakes**
- **Leadership that protects the relational**
- **Language that tolerates the imperfect**
- **A practice that prioritizes courage over form**

And not least:
A belief that what's said doesn't need to be finished — but beginning.

Micro-Disruptions: When Someone Chooses to See

- A teacher who says: *"I'm worried, even though I don't have numbers."*
- A pedagogue who asks: *"Have you actually had a good day?"*
- A leader who says: *"It makes me uneasy, even though it's not formally relevant."*
- A colleague who asks: *"Is there something we're overlooking?"*

These aren't big revolutions. They're small restorations of humanity.

When Children Say It — And We Ignore

"I said it — but they said I should do the assignment first." – Student, 10 years

"I shouted. But I don't think anyone saw it as a shout." – Student, 8th grade

"I just wanted to show I was having a hard time. But they only saw trouble." – Student, 7th grade

We must learn to interpret unrest as statement. And rejection as vulnerability. It requires that we see — and dare to stay in the gaze.

The Courage to Witness

Choosing to see requires:

Emotional Capacity: The ability to tolerate difficult emotions without being overwhelmed.

Professional Support: Colleagues and supervisors who can help process what we observe.

Clear Boundaries: Understanding what we can and cannot control or fix.

Action Pathways: Knowing what to do with our observations once we acknowledge them.

Self-Care: Maintaining our own well-being so we can continue to be present for others.

The Ripple Effects of Seeing

When we choose to see and acknowledge difficult realities:

Validation: People feel heard and understood rather than invisible.

Connection: Authentic relationships develop based on truth rather than pretense.

Change: Problems that are acknowledged can begin to be addressed.

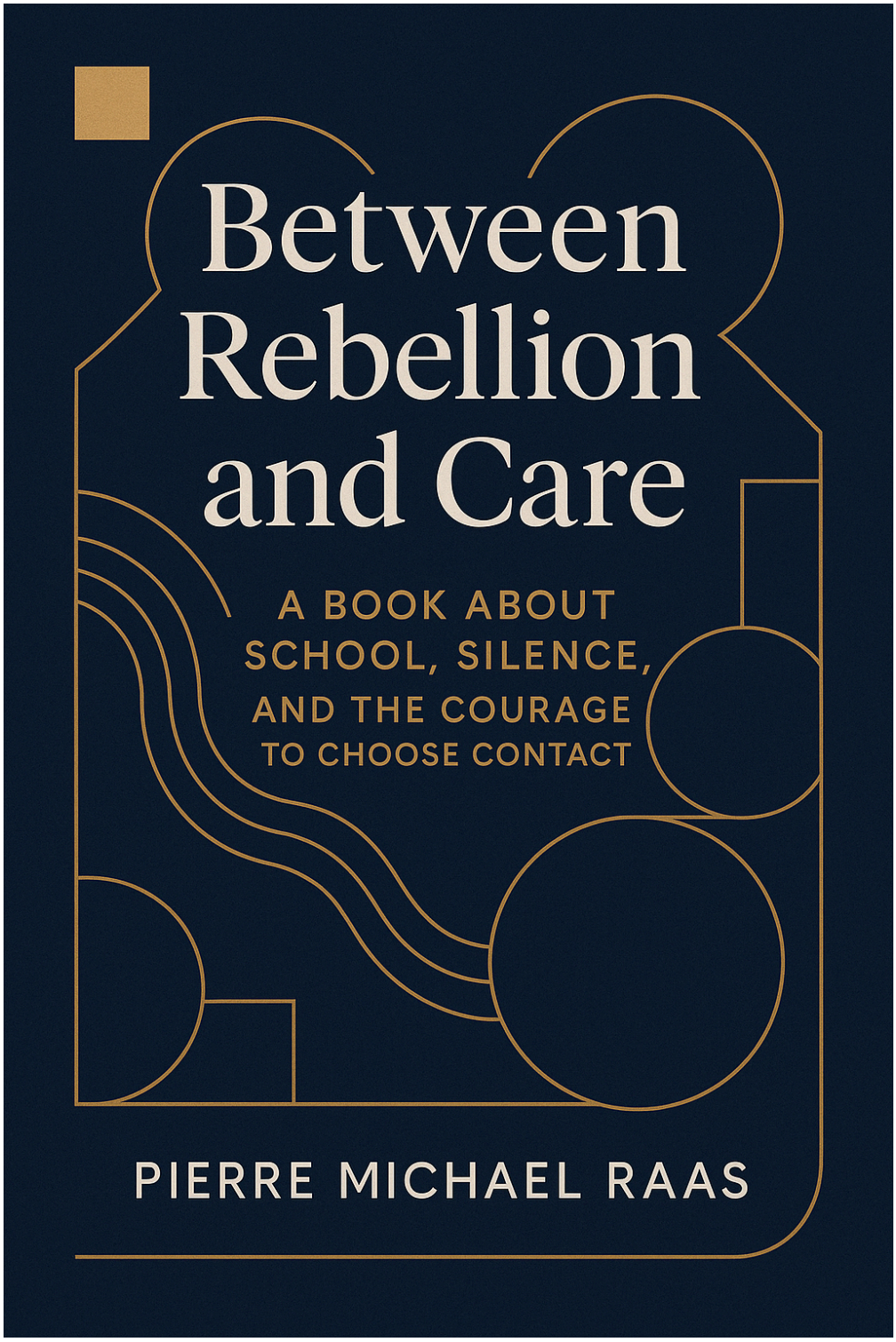
Culture: Organizations become more honest and responsive.

Modeling: Others learn that it's safe to see and speak about difficult things.

Reflection

- What have you seen — but refrained from acting on?
- What would happen if you said what you've thought?
- What price have you paid — to avoid the other's price?

Chapter 14 – A School with Room for Doubt



Doubt is not indecision. It is consideration. A school that doesn't tolerate doubt doesn't tolerate humans either.

The school world loves clarity. We take care with plans, schedules, guidelines, evaluation practices. We establish goals and success criteria. We incorporate progression and documentation into daily life. But there's something the schedule can't do: Tolerate what we don't know.

Doubt is not a deficiency. It's a condition. And precisely because of this, it's important.

The profession contains it all the time. When we stand before students and ask if they actually understand, or when we read an administrative text and think, how should this be used in reality?

But doubt rarely has status. It rarely has space. And when we lose space for doubt — we also lose contact with ourselves.

Doubt's Role in Practice

Doubt is a sign of:

- **Ethical vigilance**
- **Professional reflection**
- **Human responsibility**
- **Professional attention**
- **Willingness to adjust**

Doubt is not a problem. It's a process. But in structures where certainty equals success, doubt becomes weakness.

And that's where the misunderstanding arises.

A Teacher Who Chose to Doubt Aloud

She stood with a student who repeatedly interrupted teaching. She had tried conversation, reward, structure, contact. Nothing worked.

In the team she said:
"I don't know if what I'm doing is right. Maybe I'm contributing to the problem — without wanting to."

Someone answered:
"Just that you dare to say it changes the atmosphere."

They began talking about role, language, and responsibility. Not with methods — but with wonder.

The doubt didn't become doubtfulness. It became contact.

A Pedagogue Who Hid His Doubt

He sat in recess and felt unrest in his body. He had gotten a new student group, and none of his usual approaches worked. But he said nothing. To colleagues he said:

"It's going. I just need to find the rhythm."

Internally he said:
"Maybe I can't do this."

It took four months before he said it aloud. And only then did he begin to find a rhythm that fit precisely this group.

Doubt, carried alone, becomes wear.

Why Do We Hide Doubt?

Professionals say:

- *"You have to seem confident."*
- *"If I say I'm in doubt, they'll think I'm unprofessional."*
- *"There's no time to think so much."*
- *"It creates unrest if we seem uncertain."*

But what we're actually afraid of isn't the doubt. It's the reaction to it.

Therefore we choose silence — even when doubt contains the most professional in us.

Voices from Practice

"I doubt every day. But I don't dare say it in meetings." – Teacher, 48 years

"They think I know everything about relational work. But sometimes I fumble." – Pedagogue, 39 years

"If I say I doubt, people think I've lost direction. But maybe it's doubt that gives me direction." – School principal

"My work functions when I dare to be in what I don't understand." – AKT advisor

Professional Doubt Spaces

Doubt arises in:

- **Classroom management**
- **Documentation work**
- **Student relationships**
- **Parent collaboration**
- **Meetings with professional disagreement**
- **Personal choices in the role**

But we rarely have space for it. Not formally. Not collegially. Not organizationally.

And therefore doubt becomes private — even when it's shared.

A Leader with Doubt as Form

She said to her staff:
"We've gotten a new municipal strategy. I don't know if it fits our practice. Should we investigate it together?"

It didn't become an evaluation. It became a conversation. About what works. What doesn't work. What feels right — and what feels wrong.

The doubt didn't become rejection. It became investigation.

Silence as Resistance to Doubt

When doubt isn't tolerated, there arises:

- **Professional closedness**
- **Lack of language for complexity**
- **Anxiety about assessment**
- **Drop in collegial trust**
- **Cultural uniformity**

We think we create calm. But calm without doubt becomes stiffness.

A School with Doubt Practice

Every Friday at 11 they set aside 20 minutes for "what I don't know." Everyone could contribute. No one needed to solve anything.

It wasn't problem-oriented. It was practice-containing.

A teacher said:
"I've never felt so professional as when I said: 'I don't know how to meet him'."

Doubt became status. Not as weakness — but as strength.

Students on Doubt

"My teacher said she wasn't sure – and then I dared to ask." – Student, 8th grade

"When adults seem too certain, I don't dare say anything." – Student, 7th grade

"I feel safe when we try something together – not when it feels like she already knows everything." – Student, 9th grade

When Doubt Becomes Professional Strength

Doubt creates:

- **Awareness of imbalances**
- **Precision in contact**
- **Genuine conversation**
- **Collegial curiosity**
- **Goals that adjust along the way**

It doesn't make us less professional. It makes us more alive — and more ethical.

The Wisdom of Not Knowing

Embracing doubt requires:

Intellectual Humility: Recognizing the limits of our knowledge and expertise.

Comfort with Ambiguity: Learning to function effectively even when we don't have all the answers.

Curiosity over Certainty: Valuing questions as much as answers.

Collaborative Learning: Seeking input from others rather than trying to know everything ourselves.

Growth Mindset: Viewing uncertainty as an opportunity for learning rather than a sign of failure.

Creating Doubt-Friendly Cultures

Organizations that embrace doubt:

- Reward questions as much as answers
- Create safe spaces for admitting uncertainty
- Value process over product
- Encourage experimentation and learning from failure
- Model vulnerability at all levels

Micro-Disruptions

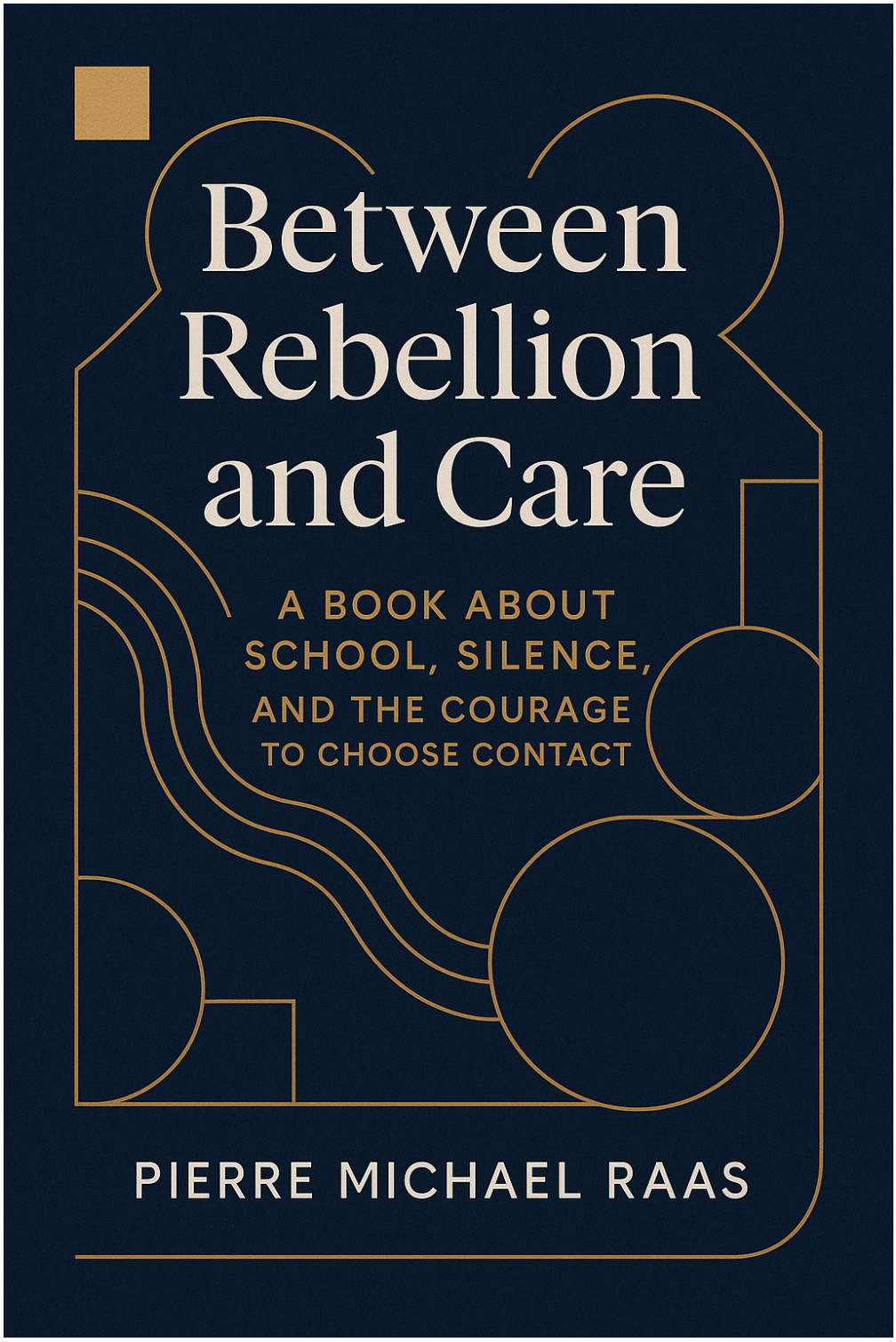
- A pedagogue who says: *"I don't know what to do here – will you help me think?"*
- A teacher who formulates: *"My plan doesn't fit the day – I doubt, and that must be allowed space."*
- A leader who asks: *"What do we choose not to see because we think we know enough?"*

Doubt opens. It moves. It changes — without having to finish.

Reflection

- When have you doubted — and chosen to say it aloud?
- What space does the uncertain have in your collegial rooms?
- How does it feel to be met with: *"It's okay that you don't know"*?

Chapter 15 – Between Rebellion and Care



You don't have to choose between taking care and speaking up. You have to learn to stand in both — simultaneously. For the professional human lives precisely there: in the tension between resistance and closeness.

School needs structure. But it also needs cracks. It needs directional organization. But also space where someone says: "This doesn't make sense." It needs adults who hold the frameworks. But also voices that dare to break them. It needs care. But it also needs rebellion.

And one is not the opposite of the other. One enables the other.

The Function of Rebellion

Rebellion is:

- **A protest against what doesn't work**
- **An insistence on contact**
- **A language that won't be adapted**
- **A movement that demands action**

Rebellion is not unrest. It's not resistance for resistance's sake. It's an ethical pulse. A signal from the body — when structure doesn't fit reality.

The Function of Care

Care is:

- **A space for relief**
- **A will to contain**
- **A quiet gaze that sees without correcting**
- **A regulation that creates trust**

But care without rebellion becomes compliance. Care without courage becomes adaptation. We shouldn't just take care. We should also dare to speak up.

A Teacher with Rebellion in Her Voice

She said in a team meeting:
"I know we should follow the plan. But I can sense that it's doing something bad to the children."

No one answered. But the atmosphere changed.

The week after, a colleague said:
"I think you're right. I've just been afraid to take attention."

The rebellion didn't become conflict. It became movement.

A Pedagogue with Care as Courage

He sat with a student who was repeatedly perceived as 'difficult'. He didn't say: *"He needs boundaries."* He said:

"He needs a human who doesn't withdraw."

It was perceived as soft. But it was precise. For it requires courage to stay — when everyone else withdraws.

The Balance Point

The tension between rebellion and care is not a problem to be solved. It's a dynamic to be navigated. Both are necessary:

Rebellion without care becomes destructive criticism that tears down without building up.

Care without rebellion becomes enabling that maintains harmful status quos.

Rebellion with care becomes transformative action that challenges systems while supporting people.

When Students Rebel

Student rebellion often signals unmet needs:

- A cry for autonomy and voice
- Resistance to dehumanizing practices
- A demand for authentic relationships
- Frustration with irrelevant learning
- A response to injustice or unfairness

Our response to student rebellion reveals our values. Do we see it as defiance to be crushed, or as information to be understood?

When Professionals Rebel

Professional rebellion might look like:

- Questioning policies that harm students
- Refusing to implement practices that feel wrong
- Speaking up about systemic problems
- Advocating for resources and support
- Protecting vulnerable students from harmful procedures

This kind of rebellion requires courage and often comes with risks.

The Caring Rebel

The most effective change agents combine rebellion with care:

- They challenge systems while supporting the people within them
- They speak truth while maintaining relationships
- They resist harmful practices while offering alternatives
- They fight for justice while showing compassion
- They disrupt the status quo while building community

Creating Space for Both

Educational environments that honor both rebellion and care:

- Welcome difficult questions and conversations
- Protect people who speak up about problems
- Distinguish between personal attacks and systemic critique
- Encourage innovation and experimentation
- Value both stability and change

The Courage to Care and Rebel

Living in this tension requires:

Emotional Intelligence: Understanding when to push and when to support.

Strategic Thinking: Knowing how to create change effectively.

Relationship Skills: Maintaining connections even during conflict.

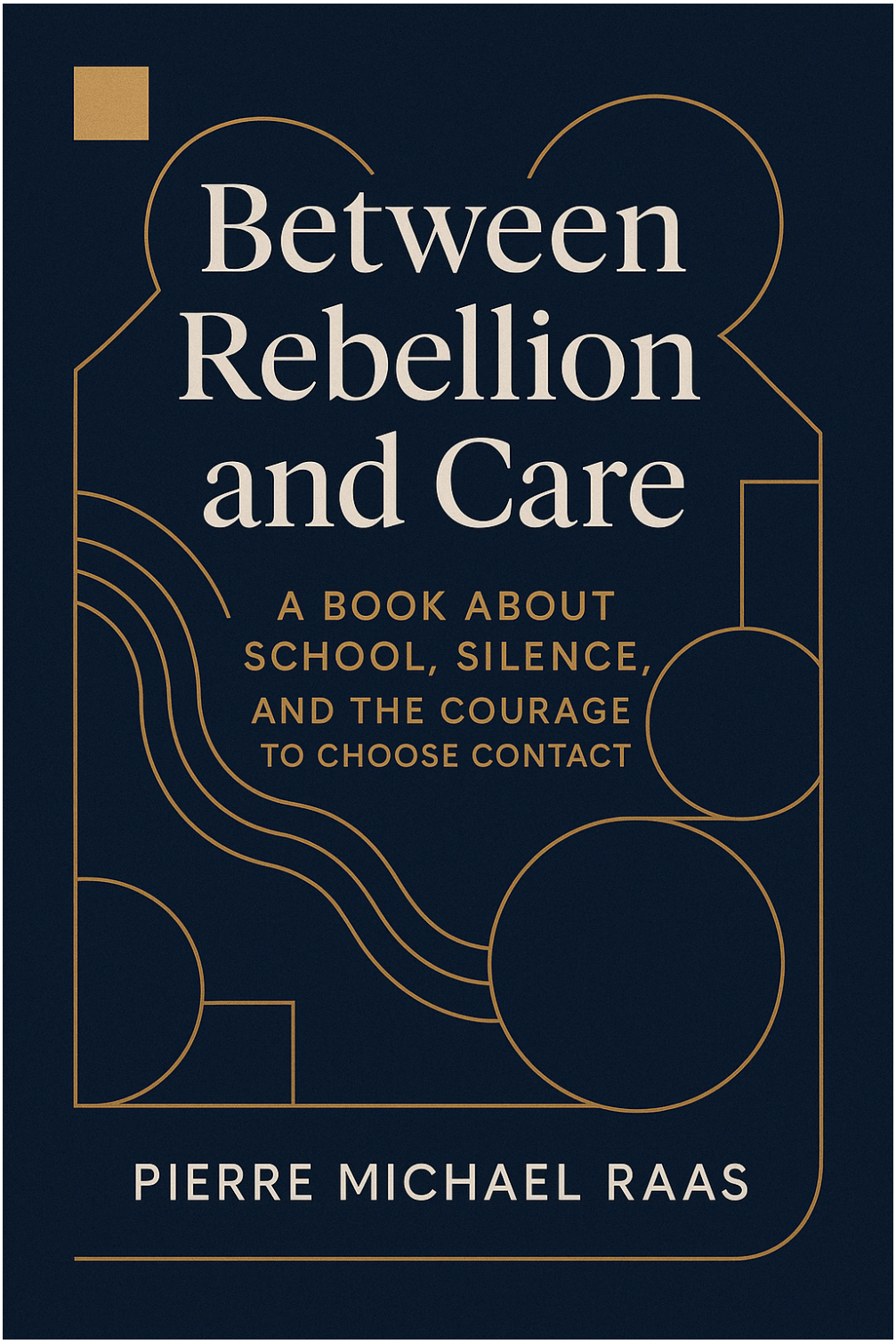
Self-Care: Sustaining yourself for the long journey of change.

Community: Finding others who share your values and vision.

Reflection

- When have you chosen rebellion, and when have you chosen care?
- How might you combine both in your current challenges?
- What would change if you saw rebellion and care as partners rather than opposites?

Chapter 16 – Digital Life and the Silent Screen



School is filled with sounds, voices, and messages. We have talked about the silence that arises when words are absent — in the hallway, in the meeting, in the gaze.

But in a time when the screen fills more and more of our lives — and children's — a new form of silence arises. A silence that isn't about the absence of speech, but about the absence of genuine contact, even when we are "connected."

Digital reality has become an unavoidable part of school life. Messages rush, social media bubbles, and the screen is often the first and last thing children encounter in a day. But what does this new form of "connection" cost when we talk about formation, relationship, and professional care?

When the Screen Is Silent — And the Human Disappears

We have learned to interpret unrest as statement and rejection as vulnerability. But the screen speaks a different language. It can hide:

- **Loneliness behind "friends":** A child can have hundreds of digital connections and countless online "friends," but still sits alone with their unrest. The paradoxical thing is that the more we "are together" with other people online and thus get more digital "friends," the fewer deep and meaningful friendships we often get in the real world. The screen gives an illusion of connection but can wear on the ability for close, unfiltered interaction that builds real trust and security.
- **Silent cries in notifications:** A child might send a signal about distress through a cryptic status update or an evasive message, but we interpret it as "something with social media" rather than a cry for help. Professional compassion requires that we see the difficult, but digital language can make it hard to read.
- **Absence of the full voice:** When we communicate via screen, body language, tone, and the "silent language" that carries so much meaning in physical interaction disappear. The lack of presence — in the gaze, in the voice, in the body — creates a new form of silence and distance.
- **Cultural uniformity in algorithms' silence:** The algorithms' language is neutral. They favor engagement and quick responses, not necessarily depth, doubt, or the slowness that formation and relationship require. This can contribute to a "performative school culture" where visible activity overshadows what cannot be measured.

Practice Story: The Online Unrest

A teacher told: *"I noticed that a student who was normally very talkative suddenly became very quiet in class. She sat with her phone during breaks, even when the others played. I asked her what she was doing. She just answered 'nothing'. But her gaze was distant."*

The teacher could have ignored it as "just a bit of unrest" or "that's how young people are." But she chose to create an "in-between space." She sat beside her one day without saying anything. After a while the student said: *"All my friends are online. But I just feel so alone when I see them all together."*

The silence here became double communication: outwardly "I'm okay," inwardly "I'm lonely." The teacher had met the child in its complexity, not in its function.

The Dilemma: Digital Presence vs. Human Contact

We are caught in a paradox: The screen gives us access but perhaps takes some of our presence. It promises efficiency but perhaps creates a new form of silence.

- When does "quick response" become "superficial presence"?
- When does the digital facade hide real distress?
- How do we ensure that parent collaboration isn't reduced to emails and system messages when grief, shame, and loss need to be shared?

Children sense when words are empty. And they sense when contact is superficial, even though the screen glows. *"I feel safe when someone remembers my name,"* said a student — a name that can disappear in a sea of digital profiles.

Giving Voice to the Digital In-Between Space

Navigating this requires that we as professionals dare to:

- **Choose slowness, even when tempo calls digitally:** Let the pause stand. Refrain from filling every minute.
- **Invite conversation without direction — also offline:** Create space for unplanned meetings where the most important "screen time" is the gaze

between humans.

- **Tolerate not knowing — in the digital landscape:** We don't need to be experts in all apps or trends. But we should dare to ask: *"What do you experience here? What does it do to you?"*
- **Prioritize "what might happen" over "what should happen" on screen:** Acknowledge that the deepest learning and relationship often arise in the unpredictable, unplanned encounter.

It's a micro-disruption to say: *"Let's put the phones away for a moment. Shall we just be for a bit?"*

The Challenge of Digital Formation

Digital technology presents unique challenges for human formation:

Attention Fragmentation: Constant notifications and multitasking can undermine the sustained attention that deep learning requires.

Comparison Culture: Social media creates endless opportunities for students to compare themselves to others, often leading to anxiety and self-doubt.

Instant Gratification: The immediate rewards of digital interaction can make the slower processes of relationship-building and deep thinking feel frustrating.

Virtual vs. Real: Students may become more comfortable with digital personas than authentic self-expression.

Creating Digital Wisdom

Rather than rejecting technology, we need to develop digital wisdom:

Intentional Use: Teaching students to use technology purposefully rather than compulsively.

Critical Thinking: Helping students question what they see online and understand how algorithms shape their experience.

Balance: Modeling and teaching the importance of both connected and disconnected time.

Empathy: Using technology to build understanding rather than division.

Reflection: Creating space to process digital experiences and their impact on well-being.

Reflection

- How has digital technology changed the way you connect with students and colleagues?

- What opportunities and challenges does technology create for authentic relationship?
- How might you create more intentional boundaries around digital communication?

Chapter 17 – And What Now?

Reading is not the same as having acted. But it's a beginning. And some beginnings don't start with answers — but with will.

You sit with a book. You may have read from start to finish. Maybe you've dived into individual chapters. Maybe you've underlined, wondered, recognized, or withdrawn.

And now you're here. Chapter 17. The chapter that's not in the plan. The one that shouldn't be written — and therefore must be written.

For there's a point where reading becomes reality. Where text becomes thought. Where thought becomes conversation. Where conversation becomes practice.

And that point is now.

What Do You Carry With You?

You have read about:

- **Professional compassion** — that requires boundaries
- **Conversation** — as the teacher's most important tool
- **System failures and silence** — as hidden daily reality
- **Doubt** — as ethical and professional strength
- **Rebellion** — as an expression of care
- **Voices** — that weren't heard but found their way in the text

But the most important thing isn't what you've read. The most important thing is what you'll do with it.

What Will You Say Aloud?

You can choose to say:

- *"We don't have language for the difficult – let's find it together."*
- *"My practice works – but it lacks space."*

- *"I'm in doubt – and I'm in doubt on purpose."*
- *"I think we've forgotten something important."*

These sentences don't require courage. They create courage.

And that might be your next step.

A School That Read Together

A pedagogue group decided to take one chapter per month. Not to evaluate — but to open conversation. They talked without minutes. They underlined without expectation. They said: *"We want to listen to each other — not to methods."*

After five months, system change hadn't occurred. But meaning had occurred. And that, they thought, was enough to continue.

You May Doubt

When you stand with this book, you may:

- **Be disagreeing**
- **Be tired**
- **Be curious**
- **Be calm**
- **Be moved**

You may also choose to do nothing.

But if you do something — then do it with an eye for relationship. Not for performance. Not for the system. Not for "what we usually do."

Professional Courage

Courage isn't about daring everything. Courage is about:

- **Asking, even when you don't have the answer**
- **Speaking, even when your voice shakes**
- **Wondering, even when structure tightens**
- **Staying — even when relationship is difficult**

And courage isn't something you should have. It's something that's created — in practice, in pauses, in community.

Voices Reading Along

"I thought I should get new knowledge. I got new language." – Teacher, 44 years

"I felt recognized — and also a bit challenged." – Pedagogue, 37 years

"The most important thing wasn't understanding — but daring to open." – AKT advisor

"If we read and act — it doesn't become a book. It becomes a practice change." – School principal

What Now?

You can choose:

- **To let the book be a beginning**
- **To take one chapter to the meeting**
- **To underline two sentences you won't forget**
- **To ask one colleague what she thought**
- **To go out to the schoolyard — and just be there a bit longer**

You don't need to do everything. You just need to do something — that's genuine.

If You Should Gather

Gather:

- **What you recognized**
- **What you didn't know you had missed**
- **What you want to say forward**
- **What you believe in — even when it resists**

Between rebellion and care lives a choice: Will you stand in the tension — or fall out of the system's rhythm?

It's not a choice you should take alone. It's a choice you can take in conversation.

The Invitation Forward

This book ends, but the conversation continues. In hallways and classrooms, in meetings and quiet moments, in the daily choices that shape educational culture.

The invitation is simple: to bring more humanity into the structures that serve our children. To create space for the difficult conversations. To honor both the need for order and the messiness of human growth.

To choose, again and again, between rebellion and care — and to discover that sometimes they are the same thing.

Reflection

- What stands clear for you — and why?
- Who will you talk with — and about what?
- Which chapter will you reread — or pass on?
- Which sentence will you live with — in practice?

Afterword – Between Rebellion and Care

In a time when tempo and systems often set the agenda, this book has tried to put something else into play. Something softer, more human. A conversation that perhaps doesn't have haste, but has meaning.

I don't know if the stories and reflections you've encountered have changed anything. But I hope they've opened a small in-between space. A place where silence and unrest can be allowed to be signs of contact — and not absence.

Thank you to you who read along. Thank you to colleagues, students, conversation partners, and the schools that still want something. Thank you to you who believe that professional practice isn't just about methods — but about humanity, courage, and care.

If you sit with unrest, desire, or thought after reading — then it's not an ending. It's a beginning.

We might meet. In the hallway. In conversation. In rebellion and care.

—
Pierre Michael Raas

Acknowledgments

Thank you for the conversation, for the courage, and for everyday life

This book wasn't possible without conversations. Not those with appointments, but those with presence. Thank you to the colleagues, students, leaders, and professionals I've met through the years — in breaks, in hallways, and in work with difficult things.

Thank you to the people who dare to talk about what doesn't always fit in the schedule. Who dare to say *"this doesn't make sense"* — and simultaneously want to create something that does.

Thank you to the courageous teachers and pedagogical voices who insist that school isn't just necessary — it should also be human.

And thank you to you who have read along. You have taken the words in. And that makes them alive.

With warm regards,
Pierre

Appendix A: Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Chapter 1: Formation in Practice - Which moments in your practice were formation — even though you didn't plan it? - When have you prioritized the human over the academic — and what happened? - What formation do you avoid because time is short — and how can you choose differently?

Chapter 2: The School's Silent Language - What messages do you send without saying them? - What have you seen but not said — and why? - How can you create space for the conversations that matter?

Chapter 3: The Raw Material of Relationships - What do you want with your relationships — and what don't you dare to want? - When have you chosen content over presence — and what happened? - How do you create a relational practice that tolerates your own boundaries?

Chapter 4: What We Don't Talk About - What silence are you carrying, and what is it costing you? - When have you chosen silence over truth, and what were the consequences? - How might your relationships change if you found the courage to speak more authentically?

Chapter 5: The Form of Community - Who is included in your community – and who isn't? - What do you need to change – so someone can step in? - When have you created community – without knowing it?

Chapter 6: Leadership and Powerlessness - Where do you feel most powerful in your leadership? Most powerless? - How do you maintain hope when facing seemingly insurmountable challenges? - What would change if you focused more on influence than control?

Chapter 7: The Courage for In-Between Spaces - When have you experienced meaningful in-between spaces in your work? - What keeps you from slowing down and being present? - How might you create more opportunities for emergence in your practice?

Chapter 8: Professional Compassion - How do you balance caring deeply with maintaining professional boundaries? - When have you experienced compassion fatigue, and what helped you recover? - What support do you need to practice sustainable compassion?

Chapter 9: Schedule or Conversation? - When have you chosen conversation over schedule? What happened? - How do you balance structure with flexibility in your practice? - What would change if you trusted conversation as much as curriculum?

Chapter 10: When Children Speak First - When have you let a student's question or comment redirect your teaching? - What keeps you from following children's interests more often? - How might your classroom change if students spoke first more regularly?

Chapter 11: System Failures and Silence - What system failures have you seen — and have you said them aloud? - What silence have you contributed to — and how would you formulate it differently? - How can you create micro-disruptions — in culture, practice, or structure?

Chapter 12: The Price of Silence - What silence are you carrying, and what is it costing you? - When have you chosen silence over truth, and what were the consequences? - How might your relationships change if you found the courage to speak more authentically?

Chapter 13: What We Choose to Look Away From - What have you seen — but refrained from acting on? - What would happen if you said what you've thought? - What price have you paid — to avoid the other's price?

Chapter 14: A School with Room for Doubt - When have you doubted — and chosen to say it aloud? - What space does the uncertain have in your collegial rooms? - How does it feel to be met with: "It's okay that you don't know"?

Chapter 15: Between Rebellion and Care - When have you chosen rebellion, and when have you chosen care? - How might you combine both in your current challenges? - What would change if you saw rebellion and care as partners rather than opposites?

Chapter 16: Digital Life and the Silent Screen - How has digital technology changed the way you connect with students and colleagues? - What opportunities and challenges does technology create for authentic relationship? - How might you create more intentional boundaries around digital communication?

Chapter 17: And What Now? - What stands clear for you — and why? - Who will you talk with — and about what? - Which chapter will you reread — or pass on? - Which sentence will you live with — in practice?

Appendix B: Practical Strategies for Educational Transformation

Creating Space for Difficult Conversations - Establish clear agreements for respectful dialogue - Use skilled facilitation for challenging discussions - Offer multiple formats for sharing perspectives - Ensure follow-through on concerns raised - Protect people from retaliation when they speak up

Building Sustainable Relationships - Practice emotional regulation and self-awareness - Develop active listening skills - Learn to empathize without absorbing others' emotions - Maintain consistent presence within appropriate boundaries - Believe in students' capacity for growth and change

Fostering Professional Doubt and Reflection - Create regular time for "what I don't know" discussions - Encourage questions as much as answers - Value process over product - Model vulnerability at all levels of leadership - Celebrate learning from mistakes and uncertainty

Balancing Structure and Flexibility - Build buffers into schedules for unexpected needs - Practice responsive teaching that adjusts to student readiness - Develop conversation protocols for academic work - Create regular reflection time for processing learning - Honor both the need for order and the messiness of growth

Developing Professional Compassion - Learn about trauma-informed practices - Practice setting healthy boundaries - Develop emotional regulation skills - Seek supervision and support regularly - Maintain self-care as a professional responsibility

Leading Through Influence - Build authentic relationships with all stakeholders - Share compelling visions of what's possible - Develop others' capacity and confidence - Model the values you want to see - Create cultures that support risk-taking and learning

Creating Inclusive Communities - Examine policies and practices for unintended barriers - Teach skills for including others - Address exclusion when it occurs - Celebrate diversity while building unity - Create shared experiences across difference

Embracing In-Between Spaces - Build buffer time into schedules - Practice presence and mindfulness - Develop comfort with uncertainty - Trust emergent learning processes - Value relationship as much as curriculum

Navigating Digital Challenges - Teach intentional technology use - Create device-free spaces and times - Help students develop critical thinking about digital media - Model healthy digital boundaries - Use technology to enhance rather than replace human connection

Supporting Student Voice - Start with student questions and interests - Create multiple ways for students to share perspectives - Follow student curiosity even when it diverges from plans - Value student experiences as curriculum resources - Share decision-making power appropriately

---

Appendix C: Resources for Further Learning

Books on Educational Philosophy and Practice - Gert Biesta: "The Beautiful Risk of Education" - Nel Noddings: "Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education" - Parker Palmer: "The Courage to Teach" - bell hooks: "Teaching to Transgress" - Paulo Freire: "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" - Maxine Greene: "The Dialectic of Freedom" - John Dewey: "Experience and Education" - Maria Montessori: "The Absorbent Mind"

Research on Relationships in Education - John Hattie's work on visible learning and teacher-student relationships - Studies on trauma-informed education practices - Research on social-emotional learning and student outcomes - Literature on restorative justice in schools - Investigations into the impact of school climate on learning - Studies on culturally responsive teaching - Research on student voice and agency

Professional Development Opportunities - Training in conflict resolution and difficult conversations - Workshops on emotional intelligence and self-regulation - Programs in trauma-informed care and practice - Courses on inclusive education and community building - Supervision and coaching for educational professionals - Mindfulness and contemplative practices for educators - Leadership development programs

Organizations and Networks - Professional associations for educators and school leaders - Networks focused on educational equity and justice - Communities of practice around innovative teaching methods - Support groups for educators dealing with challenging situations - Online forums for sharing resources and experiences - Local and regional educational cooperatives - International networks for educational transformation

Online Resources - Websites focused on social-emotional learning - Blogs by reflective practitioners - Podcasts on educational innovation and reform - Video libraries of exemplary teaching practices - Research databases and academic journals - Professional learning communities and forums

Assessment and Reflection Tools - Protocols for examining student work - Surveys for gathering student and family feedback - Self-assessment tools for professional growth - Frameworks for analyzing school culture and climate - Rubrics for evaluating relationship quality - Tools for documenting and sharing practice

Support for Specific Challenges - Resources for working with traumatized students - Guides for supporting English language learners - Materials for creating inclusive classrooms - Strategies for engaging reluctant learners - Approaches for working with families in crisis - Methods for addressing bias and discrimination

Philosophical and Theoretical Foundations - Works on critical pedagogy and social justice education - Literature on democratic education and student voice - Texts on the ethics of care in educational settings - Research on the sociology of education - Studies on the psychology of learning and development - Explorations of the philosophy of education

Appendix D: Conversation Starters and Discussion Protocols

Opening Questions for Team Meetings - "What's one thing you've noticed about our students lately that we haven't talked about?" - "When have you felt most connected to your purpose as an educator this week?" - "What's something you're struggling with that you'd like support thinking through?" - "What would change if we prioritized relationships as much as curriculum?" - "What question are you carrying that you haven't had a chance to explore?"

Protocols for Difficult Conversations 1. **Check-in Round**: Each person shares how they're feeling and what they need 2. **Issue Identification**: Clearly name what needs to be discussed 3. **Multiple Perspectives**: Ensure all voices are heard before problem-solving 4. **Common Ground**: Identify shared values and goals 5. **Action Planning**: Decide on concrete next steps 6. **Check-out**: Reflect on the conversation process and outcomes

Questions for Student Voice - "What helps you learn best in this classroom?" - "When do you feel most supported here?" - "What would you change about how we do things?" - "How do you know that you matter in this community?" - "What do you need from the adults here?" - "What questions are you most curious about?" - "When do you feel most like yourself at school?"

Reflection Prompts for Individual Practice - "What am I avoiding in my professional relationships, and why?" - "When do I feel most authentic in my role as an educator?" - "What would I do differently if I weren't afraid of making mistakes?" - "How do I know when I'm prioritizing compliance over connection?" - "What doubt am I carrying that might actually be wisdom?"

Family Engagement Conversations - "What are your hopes and dreams for your child?" - "What should we know about your child that might not show up in school?" - "How does your child learn best at home?" - "What concerns do you have about your child's experience at school?" - "How can we better support your family?"

Leadership Reflection Questions - "What am I not seeing because of my position?" - "How am I contributing to the problems I'm trying to solve?" - "What would change if I led with more vulnerability?" - "Who isn't being heard in our decision-making processes?" - "What would I do if I weren't afraid of failure?"

Community Building Activities - Story circles where people share meaningful experiences - Appreciations rounds highlighting strengths and contributions - Problem-solving sessions using collective wisdom - Vision-setting conversations about shared hopes - Conflict resolution processes that build understanding

Professional Learning Protocols - Examining student work together to understand learning - Analyzing critical incidents to improve practice - Sharing dilemmas and seeking collective wisdom - Exploring research and connecting it to practice - Reflecting on values and their implications for action

Crisis Response Conversations - "What do we know, and what don't we know?" - "Who is most affected, and how can we support them?" - "What are our immediate priorities?" - "How do we maintain our values during this challenge?" - "What can we learn from this experience?"

Appendix E: Stories from Practice

The Power of Presence

A middle school teacher noticed that one of her students, Marcus, had been increasingly withdrawn. Instead of immediately referring him to the counselor or calling his parents, she decided to simply be present. She started arriving to class a few minutes early and staying a few minutes late, creating informal opportunities for connection.

One day, Marcus lingered after class. "Ms. Johnson," he said quietly, "my parents are getting divorced, and I don't know where I'm going to live." The teacher didn't try to solve his problem or offer advice. She simply said, "That sounds really scary and confusing. I'm glad you told me."

That moment of being heard and acknowledged gave Marcus the strength to get through the day. Over the following weeks, the teacher continued to check in with him, not as a counselor or social worker, but as a caring adult who saw him as more than just a student in her class.

When Systems Fail, Relationships Sustain

A elementary school was facing severe budget cuts that eliminated the school counselor position. The principal could have simply announced the change and moved on. Instead, she gathered the staff and said, "We're losing our counselor, but we're not losing our commitment to supporting our students' emotional needs. How do we do this together?"

The teachers brainstormed ways to integrate social-emotional support into their daily practice. They created "check-in circles" at the beginning of each day, established peer mediation programs, and developed a system for flagging students who needed extra support.

While the loss of the counselor was significant, the collaborative response strengthened the school community and reminded everyone that caring for students is everyone's responsibility.

The Courage to Change Course

A high school English teacher had planned an ambitious unit on Shakespeare that aligned with district standards and testing requirements. But as she looked at her students—many of whom were dealing with trauma, family instability, and economic hardship—she realized that Hamlet's existential crisis might not be what they needed most.

Instead, she shifted to contemporary poetry and personal narrative writing. Students wrote about their own experiences, shared their stories, and connected literature to their lives. Test scores didn't improve dramatically, but engagement soared, and several students later said the class helped them process difficult experiences and find their voices.

When questioned by administrators about the curriculum change, the teacher explained her reasoning and provided evidence of student growth in areas that mattered beyond test scores. The conversation led to broader discussions about responsive teaching and the importance of meeting students where they are.

The Student Who Taught the Teacher

Mr. Rodriguez was struggling with classroom management in his 4th grade class. Traditional behavior systems weren't working, and he was feeling frustrated and ineffective. During a particularly challenging day, he sat down with his students and said, "I need your help. What I'm doing isn't working. What do you think we should do?"

The conversation that followed was revelatory. Students shared their perspectives on the classroom rules, explained what motivated them, and offered suggestions for creating a more positive environment. Together, they developed new agreements and systems that honored both structure and student voice.

The transformation wasn't immediate, but it was profound. Students took ownership of their classroom community, conflicts decreased, and learning increased. Mr. Rodriguez learned that sometimes the best teaching happens when we're willing to learn from our students.

The Principal's Difficult Decision

Principal Williams faced a dilemma when a popular teacher was accused of making inappropriate comments to students. The allegations were serious but not clearly substantiated. She could have quietly transferred the teacher or ignored the concerns, but she chose a different path.

She conducted thorough interviews with students and staff, consulted with district officials, and sought guidance from legal counsel. Throughout the process, she maintained transparency with the school community while protecting everyone's privacy and dignity.

The investigation revealed a pattern of boundary violations that, while not criminal, were inappropriate and harmful to students. The teacher was removed from the classroom and provided with professional development and support.

The process was difficult and painful for everyone involved, but it sent a clear message that student safety and well-being were the top priorities. The school community emerged stronger and more trusting of leadership.

The Transformative Conversation

A high school was struggling with racial tensions and achievement gaps. Rather than implementing another program or initiative, the principal decided to start with honest conversation. She organized listening sessions with students, families, and staff from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The conversations were difficult and sometimes uncomfortable. People shared experiences of discrimination, exclusion, and bias. They talked about assumptions, stereotypes, and systemic barriers. There were tears, anger, and moments of profound understanding.

From these conversations emerged a deeper commitment to equity and inclusion. The school developed new policies, changed instructional practices, and created ongoing opportunities for dialogue and learning. Most importantly, relationships across racial lines began to heal and strengthen.

The Teacher Who Said No

Ms. Chen was asked to implement a new reading program that required students to spend hours on computer-based activities with little human interaction. Having taught for fifteen years, she knew this approach wouldn't serve her students' needs, particularly those who were English language learners and needed rich conversation and relationship.

She could have quietly complied while privately disagreeing, but instead she chose to speak up. She presented research on effective literacy instruction, shared data about her students' needs, and proposed alternative approaches that would meet district goals while better serving students.

Her advocacy led to a pilot program that combined the required curriculum with more interactive and culturally responsive teaching methods. Other teachers joined her efforts, and eventually the district modified its approach based on the evidence and feedback from educators.

The Student Voice That Changed Everything

During a school board meeting about budget cuts, 16-year-old Maria stood up to speak during public comment. She talked about how the proposed elimination of art and music programs would affect students like her who found their passion and purpose through creative expression.

Her words were powerful, but what happened next was even more significant. Other students began to speak up, sharing their own stories and perspectives. The school board, which had been focused primarily on numbers and finances, began to see the human impact of their decisions.

The arts programs were saved, but more importantly, the district established ongoing opportunities for student voice in decision-making. Students now serve on committees, participate in budget discussions, and help shape policies that affect their education.

The Colleague Who Cared Enough to Confront

When Janet noticed that her colleague Tom seemed increasingly stressed and was snapping at students, she faced a choice. She could ignore the situation, gossip about

it with others, or address it directly with Tom.

She chose the difficult path of honest conversation. She approached Tom privately and said, "I've noticed you seem really stressed lately, and I'm worried about you. Is there anything I can do to help?"

Tom initially became defensive, but Janet's genuine concern and non-judgmental approach eventually opened the door to honest dialogue. Tom shared that he was dealing with a family crisis and felt overwhelmed at work.

Together, they developed strategies for managing his stress and supporting his students. Janet also helped connect Tom with employee assistance resources. Their relationship deepened, and Tom's teaching improved as he felt less isolated and more supported.

About the Author



Pierre Michael Raas is an educator, consultant, and thought leader in the field of educational transformation and human-centered learning. With over two decades of experience working in schools, educational organizations, and community settings, Pierre has dedicated his career to exploring the intersection of relationship, learning, and social justice in educational environments.

As the founder of **R Koncept**, Pierre works with schools, districts, and educational organizations to develop more human and equitable approaches to teaching and learning. His consulting practice focuses on helping educational communities navigate the tensions between systemic demands and human needs, supporting leaders and educators in creating environments where both learning and relationship can flourish.

Pierre's work is grounded in the belief that education is fundamentally about human formation and that the quality of relationships within educational settings determines the quality of learning that takes place. He has spent years studying and practicing what it means to hold both high expectations and deep care, to challenge systems while supporting the people within them, and to create educational environments that honor the full humanity of all participants.

Through R Koncept, Pierre provides: - **Organizational consultation** on educational transformation and culture change - **Professional development** for educators and leaders - **Facilitation** of difficult conversations about equity, justice, and educational

practice - **Coaching** for educational leaders navigating complex challenges - **Research and writing** on human-centered educational approaches

Pierre's approach to educational work is characterized by: - **Deep listening** to the experiences and perspectives of all stakeholders - **Systems thinking** that addresses root causes rather than just symptoms - **Relationship-centered practice** that prioritizes human connection and understanding - **Equity focus** that centers the needs of marginalized and underserved communities - **Collaborative methodology** that engages communities in designing their own solutions

Before founding R Koncept, Pierre worked as a teacher, administrator, and educational consultant in various settings, from urban public schools to alternative educational programs. These experiences taught him that sustainable educational change requires both individual transformation and systemic reform, and that the most powerful changes often happen through the accumulation of small, daily choices made by caring adults.

Pierre holds advanced degrees in education and has studied organizational development, conflict resolution, and social justice education. He is a frequent speaker at educational conferences and has written extensively about the challenges and possibilities of creating more human educational environments.

When not working directly with educational communities, Pierre can be found reading, writing, spending time in nature, and engaging in conversations about how we can create a more just and caring world. He believes that education is one of our most powerful tools for social transformation and that every interaction in an educational setting is an opportunity to model the kind of world we want to create.

"Between Rebellion and Care" represents the culmination of Pierre's thinking about the essential tensions that define educational work. Drawing on years of experience in schools and communities, the book offers both a critique of current educational practices and a vision for what education could become when we center relationship, equity, and human development.

Pierre lives and works with a deep commitment to the belief that education can and must be a force for justice, healing, and human flourishing. Through his writing, consulting, and direct work with educational communities, he continues to explore what it means to create schools and learning environments that serve the full humanity of all who enter them.

For more information about Pierre's work and R Koncept, visit **www.rkoncept.dk**

School is more than subjects and schedules. It is a cultural mirror – and a place for courage, relationships, and hope.

Between rebellion and care, Pierre invites the reader into a pedagogical landscape where everyday dilemmas, silences, and cultures are illuminated with sharp insight and human depth.

The book is written for all who work in and with school — teachers, leaders, parents, and professionals — and who sense that something has lost its meaning. Through 17 chapters unfolds a practice-oriented and value-based reflection on teaching, community, and professional hope.

It's not a handbook. It's a conversation. Not a critique. But a sincere question: How do we make school alive again — together?

"Between Rebellion and Care: A Book About School, Silence, and the Courage to Choose Contact" **First English Edition** Translated from Danish © 2024 Pierre Michael Raas **Original Danish Title:** "Skolen - en skæv verden lige helt færdig Pierre" All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the author, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. **Contact:** www.rkoncept.dk **ISBN:** [To be assigned] Printed and published for international distribution.*
