The Boy, The Man and the Donkey

....source unknown (adapted and modified by Amy Fox)

A man and his son were once going with their donkey to market. As they were walking along by his side, a countryman passed them and said, *"You fools, what is a donkey for but to ride upon?"*

So the man put the boy on the donkey, and they went on their way.

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The man, the boy and the donkey continued on their way, this time with the boy riding on the donkey's back. As they made their way to the market, they passed a group of men who scoffed and pointed at them.

One of the men in the group called out, "See that lazy youngster, he lets his father walk while he rides."

The father was embarrassed and so he ordered his boy to get off the donkey and instead got on himself.

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The man, the boy and the donkey continued on their way, this time with the father riding on the donkey's back.

But they hadn't gone far when they passed two women, one of whom said to the other, *"Shame on that lazy lout to let his poor little son trudge along."*

Well, the man didn't know what to do. They couldn't walk alongside the donkey, nor could the father or the son ride upon it alone.

The old man had an idea– they would both ride the donkey to the market. And so the old man took his boy up on the donkey with him.

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The father and son neared the market and as they entered the market square people started yelling at them.

"Shame on you!" they yelled, "Can't you see you are overloading this donkey with the weight of you and your son?"

The man and boy got off and tried to think what to do. They thought and they thought, and finally had an idea.

They cut down a pole and tied the donkey's feet to it. Then, they raised the pole to their shoulders and carried the donkey further into town.

Each person they passed laughed at them for they were a sight to see– a man and his boy carrying a donkey strung to a pole!

Just as the father and son came upon a bridge, the donkey began to kick wildly, eventually freeing one of his feet. This caused the boy to drop his end of the pole. In the struggle, the donkey fell over the bridge, and since his fore-feet were still tied together, he drowned.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

"If you try to please everyone, you'll please no one."
– Ricky Gervais

Since childhood we're told how to act or who we should be. Girls should be one way, boys another. And for so much of our lives, we try to live out other peoples' expectations, never really knowing who we are or what we truly want.

Take a moment to land here. Notice how you've arrived.

The goal isn't to fix or change anything, but rather to be fully in the space you're in, to arrive as you are.

DURING CLASS

Before Finishing the Story
Notice what's pulling your attention in this moment. Notice what's driving your actions. Are you running off someone else's programming or your own?

Where could you release expectation and just come back to your breath? This is a breathing practice first and if all you do is breathe today, that is enough.

After Telling the Story
If we try to please everyone, we please no one. And beyond that, we fail ourselves.

What do you need in this moment? What can you offer yourself right here?

CLOSING CLASS

If you try to please everyone, you will end up pleasing no one.

This week, where can you release expectation and judgement and where can you allow yourself to be guided by your heart, the things that matter most?

EXTRAS

When evaluating our life, it's easy to get caught up in society's or someone else's standards. However, a better way to forge our path forward, one that will make our future self proud is to align our actions with our core values.

A great take-home exercise for your group is to invite your students to think about the values that matter the most to them (i.e. integrity, authenticity, compassion, creativity, etc). See if they can make a list of about 5 core value. Then, see if they can take a core value each day and try to align their actions for that day according to that value. How did the day transpire? What changed?