

# Episode 1: Strategies for Connecting with Students featuring Sonal Kamath - Summary

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In this episode of **Beyond the Classroom**, Sonal Kamath shares her journey into education and the key experiences that shaped her teaching philosophy. Growing up in India with parents who were both educators, Sonal was immersed in an environment that prioritized learning and education. This strong foundation laid the groundwork for her lifelong passion for teaching and has profoundly influenced her approach to education.

A major theme in the conversation is the idea of continual growth for educators. Sonal stresses that being an effective teacher requires constant learning and adaptation. She believes that teaching is not static but dynamic, requiring educators to evolve alongside changing student needs and educational landscapes. By staying open to new teaching methods and approaches, Sonal encourages teachers to embrace innovation and create more engaging, relevant learning experiences.

Sonal also emphasizes a **student-centered approach** to teaching. She highlights the importance of recognizing and responding to the unique needs of each student. Rather than relying on one-size-fits-all strategies, Sonal champions tailored teaching methods that prioritize engagement, relevance, and inclusivity. She also shares how pivotal mentorship has been in her own professional growth, explaining how her mentors guided her through the transition from industry to academia. Now, as an educator herself, she is committed to mentoring others, passing along the same encouragement and guidance that was given to her.

One of the most impactful parts of Sonal's teaching journey was her transition from a career in the **cosmetic science industry** to the world of education. This professional shift equipped her with real-world insights and practical knowledge, which she now brings into the classroom to enrich her students' learning experiences. Sonal's industry experience gives her a unique perspective, blending hands-on skills with academic knowledge, helping students see the relevance of what they are learning in the classroom to their future careers.

Another key aspect of Sonal's teaching philosophy is her focus on **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**. This framework ensures that her classroom is an inclusive space, where all students—regardless of their backgrounds, abilities, or learning styles—have the opportunity to succeed. She is a strong advocate for flexibility in assessments and believes that giving

students options fosters creativity and makes the learning process more engaging. By allowing students to express their knowledge in ways that play to their strengths, Sonal ensures that everyone has the chance to shine.

Despite the challenges of managing diverse learning styles and individual needs, Sonal finds deep fulfillment in her role as an educator. She notes that the rewards of teaching—such as witnessing her students grow, overcome obstacles, and ultimately thrive—are what keep her motivated and passionate about her work. Her ability to foster trust and build meaningful relationships with her students is at the heart of her success in the classroom.

Overall, Sonal Kamath's episode of **Beyond the Classroom** offers a rich exploration of the ever-evolving nature of education and the vital role that teachers play in shaping the future.