

My Teaching Philosophy

The Importance of Lifelong Learning for Therapists

We humans are complicated and multifaceted, living in a complex world made up of systems. Those of us who choose to train and work as therapists need to understand people in this way and we need to know how to navigate these systems. Because of this, an attitude open to lifelong learning is key. With lifelong learning also comes the ability to take in, integrate, and retain new information so that learning transfer-- necessary for applying new information-- can occur. However, depending on who you are and what your past experiences with learning have been, learning may have been a challenge because of where you grew up and how your brain works, along with the explicit and implicit messages you received about learning and your ability to learn.

How I Approach Adult Education

Regarding learning, Wlodkowski & Ginsberg (2017) point out that “so much is possible” when we “avoid assuming a right-or-wrong attitude toward learning” (p. 250). With an approach to adult education that is humanistic, holistic (Johnson, 2023), contemplative, and integrative (Fan, 2004), this sentiment captures the attitude that I want to help learners cultivate for themselves. By helping learners understand how they learn, while also helping them to appreciate ways that others learn, they can know that there is no one-size-fits-all, right-or-wrong way to learn. There is only learning when we’re engaged and open to the many ways we can learn, as well as motivated to learn.

For that to happen requires that learners feel safe being seen taking chances, trying new things and learning from mistakes. Because of this, I draw from my background as a therapist to create sound relationships with learners to foster a sense of safety within the learning environment (Vela, 2002). That’s because when a person feels safe, they’re open and ready to learn. Therefore, it’s important that I create a safe and inclusive learning environment for adult learners.

How I CARE as an Adult Educator and Why I CARE

This is because as an adult educator, I CARE. I care about the well-being and growth of the learners I work with, and I show that I care through the I CARE acronym by being *integrative, collaborative, authentic, respectful, and engaging*.

- By being integrative, I view learners holistically, recognizing the many parts that make people who they are, and appreciating the unique backgrounds and experiences that learners bring into the classroom and the influence that has on how they learn.
- In taking a collaborative approach to working with learners, I help them cultivate their ability for self-directed learning. By taking ownership of their learning, they can gain a sense of accomplishment as they grow in ways that they might not have thought they could.
- Valuing authenticity, I strive to show up authentically as an educator and supervisor, embodying the four indicators of authenticity identified by Brookfield (2006) as congruence, full disclosure, responsiveness, and personhood. By being authentic in this way, while modeling professionalism, I hope to support learners in being their authentic selves.
- With learning relationships built on respect, acceptance and understanding, and in which there is genuine care, learners can know that I want to see them succeed in their learning and in increasing their ability to understand themselves, the world around them, how they interact with the world, and the impact that they have on the world.
- Knowing that learner motivation is necessary for learning transfer to occur and recognizing that motivation is influenced by how engaged learners are in their learning, I strive to provide engaging and relevant learning experiences to learners.

I CARE because I want learners to meaningfully engage with their learning so that they can foster within themselves the critical thinking skills, creativity, empathy, and compassion that are needed to be thoughtful, responsible, caring and engaged therapists in the 21st century.

References

- Brookfield, S. D. (2006). Authenticity and power. In P. Cranton (Ed.), *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2006(111), 5-16. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.223>.
- Fan, M. (2004, October 28-30). *The idea of integrated education: From the point of view of Whitehead's philosophy of education*. [Paper presentation]. The Forum for Integrated Education and Educational Reform, sponsored by the Council for Global Integrative Education. Santa Cruz, CA, USA. <http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/CGIE/fan.pdf>
- Johnson, A. (2023) Holistic learning theory: More than a philosophy. *Journal of Contemplative and Holistic Education*, 1(2), Article 3. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25035/jche.01.02.03>
- Vella, J. (2002). Learning to listen learning to teach: The power of dialogue in educating adults. *Twelve principles of effective adult learning*. Jossey-Bass.
- Wlodkowski, R. J., Ginsberg, M. B. (2017). *Enhancing adult motivation to learn: A comprehensive guide for teaching all adults*. Jossey-Bass.