

**Friends Association for Higher Education**  
**Quaker Leadings in Higher Education Series**  
**Belonging and Emotional Safety:**  
**Affective Learning Strategies for First Generation Success**

Tuesday, July 28, 2020

7-8:30pm eastern

**Resources:**

Creating Glue Activities:

<https://www.pathwaysresources.org/webinars-events/>

Search for: "Creating Glue to Cement Belonging & Emotional Safety in Your Course"

Leveraging Gravity Activities:

<https://www.pathwaysresources.org/webinars-events/>

Search for: "Leveraging Gravity to Affectively Enhance Belonging in Your Course: An Activity-Based Approach to On-Boarding Students..."

RP Group Guide: Guided Pathways Resource:

[https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/CCC\\_Guided\\_Pathways/UsingSSRDSuccessFactorsToEnsureLearning\\_June2020.pdf?ver=2020-06-04-095909-493](https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/CCC_Guided_Pathways/UsingSSRDSuccessFactorsToEnsureLearning_June2020.pdf?ver=2020-06-04-095909-493)

**Edited Chat Text:**

Please join us in opening silent worship

**Others Joining the session:**

Member of Haverford Corporation

Other: Grad Teaching Asst. and Grad Student

Am developing Friendly-informed World Univ & Sch (like MIT OCW with Wikipedia - and potentially in Open edX newly); Am a member of the RSOF, but active with Nontheist Friends / agnostic or atheist Quakers

**What did you learn from this exercise about the ground rule Open?**

**What would open mean?**

Receptive

Trust

Accessible

Inclusive

Flexible

Room for the unexpected

Welcome—the door is open

Things can come and go

Sharing their stories

Range of ideas

Accessible physically

Open to alternatives

All questions are considered and responded to with respect to individual

Welcoming

Welcoming and affirming

Willing to participate in class activities

Multicultural

Conversant language-wise

Accepting of different views

Available to the student, non-judgmental, anticipating their needs and explaining terms as they arise

Vulnerable

Provide opportunities for sharing stories and ideas, alternatives

### **What would be the risk of being an expert/mentor/authority?**

You forgot all the things you went through to get there

You could be wrong

Falling back down the ladder to arrogance.

You might be wrong and make people mad

Going back to arrogance

Close-mindedness

Not getting feedback from a peer

There's a lot we also don't know.

Open to public critique

You stop listening and learning

Being wrong

The inability to continue seeing yourself at 0

Mislead people with incorrect info

Being authoritarian is problematic

Fast matching

You have to be vulnerable yourself

You need to be aware of when you are not open

### **What does aware mean in the context of building a container?**

Being a good listener.

Slow down

Emotional intelligence awareness

Co-participatory

Consider reactions

Attending to the rest of the room, the group

Paying attention to participants needs

Aware of self, others, and environment

Understanding your biases and learning edges

Acknowledging everyone has different experiences

Having a sense of why you need to learn this

Pay attention to the group, participation, body language

That you do not know what others know

### **It is important to create emotional safety when teaching and interacting with students because . . .**

Engaging language to 'raise' consciousness

You often don't even know what you are thinking and feeling, what you will think and feel

Fearful students shut down

Anxiety impedes learning ability

They need to be open to learn

Students will be more willing to share  
Learning is a vulnerable endeavor  
Otherwise they won't trust themselves and others  
It creates an environment for open communication  
The whole point is that they are wanting to learn!  
Good education requires trust, and trust requires safety  
You will foster learning by trust  
All humans deserve to feel safe  
Model making mistakes  
Students can't do the rest of Maslow's hierarchy (enrichment) without basic needs met  
Integrative learning key

### **What changes do you notice when you go into a bio-reactive response?**

Sweating  
Shortness of breath  
Sweat  
Heart racing  
Anxiousness  
Blood pressure  
Faster heartbeat  
Flight or fight  
Can't concentrate  
Tightness  
Tunnel vision  
Less critical thinking  
...gulp...  
Is it possible you don't even notice this...  
Looking for way out, hyper focus on physical needs

### **What did you learn about this ground rule aware as it applies to teaching and learning?**

Relaxation response - Quaker silent meeting - can be beneficial  
That it's protective for learners  
Allow space for self-reflection  
Can't learn if in bio-reaction  
You don't want to paralyze your students  
Being aware is key for student learning so students can become receptive to new information  
Be attuned to bodies  
Without emotional safety, students won't be able to learn

### **Why is it important to create an emotionally safe learning environment?**

Students may be more nervous/anxious than I can see or am aware of  
One wrong move may end a student's ability to learn  
Learning to be aware of your emotional state is helpful; anxiety hinders learning  
Emotions are big(gest?) part of learning  
To promote learning at optimal levels

It fosters inclusiveness  
If they are anxious, they can't function.  
So students can bypass the amygdala  
So learning can happen  
For some students, access to education depends upon emotionally safe spaces  
If students feel unsafe, learning is biologically almost impossible  
We want a society of people who are engaged and informed!  
If emotionally safe, they are more likely to be "present" in the classroom.

**Hard questions and response to creating an emotional safe environment:**

The problem is that it is hard to create an emotionally safe learning environment; much going on and hard sometimes to see what is happening for every student  
I might disagree a bit; a part of creating curiosity is to introduce a bit of cognitive dissonance so that students feel they might want to learn something they do not currently know. Any thoughts on that?

**Diego's response:**

Wait until you have created an emotionally safe environment before moving on to cognitive dissonance as a learning tool.

**Others' responses:**

Cognitive dissonance is different than emotional bio-reactivity  
Of course, creating a safe environment is key to being able to create curiosity and courage to learn.

**Breakout session process:**

1) Speaker:

Talk about your topic for 2 minutes

Listener listen for:

- \* feeling and needs of the speaker
- \* what does the Speaker really care about
- \* something that matches your feelings, needs and purposes.

2) Listener:

Respond to the speaker explaining what they really care about. 1 minute

3) Speaker:

Confirm and clarify that the listener understood the story. 1minute

4) Exchange Roles

**Question:**

Are we supposed to talk randomly for 2 min about the topic or answer a specific question?

**Answer:**

Yes, just talk randomly about why this issue is important to you.

### **What did you learn from this exercise about the ground rule listening?**

Being listened to is deeply affirming

You have to work at it.

That was actually pretty terrifying!

It is affirming when your listener smiles

I love the idea of listening for purposes, needs, and concerns -- people feel so heard when others respond at this level of understanding

You can learn a lot about a person and feel very connected in two minutes

It is great when someone understands what you are saying.

Listening—deep and empathic listening—is really helpful.

I learned a lot from Lina

Loved being able to share a topic I don't talk about openly about  
the conversation is more rewarding with focused listening

I can't imagine my colleagues being willing to do this!!!

Listening while in conflict can be more difficult

Focusing on emotions is hard for someone who grow up focusing on content

I love listening, but sometimes feel uncertain speaking to a good listener!

Nice getting to know you, Alice. :)

Loved hearing another persons perspective!!

It is very helpful to hear a story from the person who experiences it

Same here, Paul!

Listening is a physical reaction--relies on facial expression, gesture, etc. Not just about words.

Starting with intros was important

Being heard, really heard, is reassuring and empowering.

### **What can you do to develop a caring learning environment that is emotionally safe for your students?**

Have a student consultant observe my classes and provide feedback on what I am doing.

I want to keep noting what their educational goals might be in my recorded lectures, and how my lecture might connect to that. I keep trying to make my material meaningful to them. I want to be encouraging on grading. I want to follow up promptly with absentees in the online classes with the assumption that they want to do well: What is going on? You can still catch up.

### **Questions:**

How might describing these reflexes as “hyper vigilant” remove a sense of responsibility from those students and professors in the space that enter with the privilege of not having to assess risk in these ways?

An example would help me with this question, too.

What is my responsibility to help my students learn some of these interpersonal skills: If student A feels threatened by student B; my classroom won't be safe

I second David's question. I've had to deal with students making racist remarks in the classroom. How would you deal with that?

Can you speak to how some of the embodied awareness might translate to online teaching, particularly when students might have reasons to not want to share their video?

Some of these guidelines can readily be translated to online instruction, others not. e.g., using dyads to practice listening can be translated...

How do you deal with discipline problems and still have students feel you respect them? For example, one student of a professor friend of mine brought a TV so he could watch March Madness basketball games.

Would you be willing to share your syllabus policies?

RE the TV on the wall problem -- if you think about it from the students POV, they may not realize the classroom is different than other spaces, such as a sports bar with TVs on the wall, where it's normal to have a conversation with friends over a meal and watch a sports event.

How do we make students from privileged backgrounds more uncomfortable with the dynamics that set their experiences and reference points as the default for educational spaces?

Agree, this could be a much longer conversation!

### **Debrief and Reflection Questions:**

What ideas or insights are you walking away with from this webinar?

From what you learned what will you use in your classroom or in interactions with your students?

What surprised or intrigued you?

What would you like to learn more about?

### **Debrief and Reflection Responses:**

My inattentiveness to being "attentive." Great, Diego, much appreciation for your sharing with us and dedication to students.

How do I feed my own sense of curiosity (why do I go to judgement so quickly?)

Learning and sharing with students interpersonal skills

Beware the blinders of being the 'expert'

The value of empathy and showing vulnerability was helpful.

If you don't deal with emotional safety, the rest of your goals for learning may be moot.

I struggled with the idea of revealing information about myself. Whether I should or should not. Maybe I should have done more of this!

"Gravity" and "glue"—I have been calling for "brave spaces," but I see that the container is needed first.

Intrigued: would this approach be effective in secondary schools to better reinforce the benefits for students?

Telling more of my own story--especially about overcoming an obstacle--seems like a powerful way to deepen the container.

I just realized that as we prep for COVID as Health Services. I haven't fully comprehended how overwhelming this will be for our incoming students. I need to step back and really be open and guide step-by-step and be understanding of confusion and fear.

Approach with curiosity and empathy those I want to persuade.

Looking for emotional cues and seeking to understand the source of that emotional reaction.

Similarity of student centered learning where creation of spiritual community engaging spiritual autobiographies creates emotional safety

Striking connection between Diego's guidelines and what a student consultant and I wrote about in this article: Cook-Sather, A., & Des-Ogugua, C. (2018). Lessons We Still Need to Learn on Creating More Inclusive and Responsive Classrooms: Recommendations from One Student-Faculty Partnership Program. International Journal of Inclusive Education. DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2018.1441912

The awareness of students' bio-reactions in the classroom setting that might be inhibiting their learning and that I can create a space that mitigates those reactions

I liked the way that you used the chat room to model two-way communication. It showed that you are listening.

Feel more confident in my existing leadings - I am on the right track with how much students need if they are indicating needs or responding to affective engagement

Someone mentioned "brave space," which links to conversations about, and critiques of, fragility. I'm interested in how those things connect.

**Closing and Farewell:**

Thank you!

This was valuable!

This was awesome! Thanks!

Great presentation!

Very engaging and informative

Thank you, Diego!