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the Emergence Explorer

Questions for the Week of April 16, 2007



"The Pain of Learning"



- When children act out in class, are they suffering from aloneness?
- Is *Learner's Block* the student's equivalent of a disconnect between two people? Is there a difference?
- Does using the same textbooks year after year kill the beauty in the material?

Do you know?

This Week's Questions

[These questions were posed by Ed D.]

[Question 1] When children act out in class, are they suffering from aloneness?

[Answer] Always. But seeing their suffering as aloneness can be at times a bit difficult as their symptoms may appear to be totally other than aloneness. Thus the better question to ask might be, have they suffered a disconnect. And from whom?

What I'm saying is yes. When children act out in class, they are always to some extent responding to a feeling of just having disconnected. How can I be so certain? Simply contrast this to how children behave

when they are connected to some one. Or even when they are connected to some thing, like a stuffed tiger or bear or a mobile floating above a crib. Children do not act out when they are connected. Neither do adults. However, both children and adults act out when they experience a disconnect.

Perhaps the thing to focus on here is not on what the acting out behavior looks like but rather lies beneath this acting out. Including what immediately preceded this acting out. Not that what immediately preceded it is the cause. Only that it may give an indication as to what the child (or adult) just disconnected from.

[Question 2] Is *Dead Stop* the student's equivalent of a personal disconnect between two people? Is there a difference?

[Answer] Dead Stop, otherwise known as "Learner's Block," is the experience of being so overwhelmed by digressions during the learning experience that in desperation, the Learner's bursts out of the learning process and comes to a dead stop. An, "I'm not trying anymore and I won't budge" moment. Or longer.

What is important to see here is, all learner's experience Dead Stops. All. Smart. Slow. Curious. Uninterested. Why? Because all minds have limits to what they can absorb in a given time. All minds. Thus all minds are capable of exceeding their limits without realizing it. At which point, nature takes over and says, enough for now. Stop!

[Question 3] How does using the same textbooks year after year affect the momentum of the teacher? Does it kill the beauty of the material?

[Answer] Good question. The first thing to consider though is to whom are you referring, the teacher or the student? Same text books each year may well kill the learning for the teacher. Rote learning or parroting is the bane of all quality learning experiences. However, this varies widely depending on the teacher's disposition and skill. Thus, a teacher may find renewed interest and deeper meanings with each passing year. Or not.

As for students, there is less chance of this, simply because the new students have yet to see these text books. Thus, while there will in all likelihood be threads of similarity between text books, the prior year's book, for instance, these similarities will more likely build the student's interest by staying within the momentum of past learning than anything negative.

The main thing here, as always, is the ability of the teacher to connect the students to both the learning and to him or herself. Once this connection is established, even time worn and outdated books may be a conduit through which great minds may flow. Or not, if the books are so wrongly stated or badly kept as to shock the student into a dead stop.

[Question 4] How would the experience of learning in a classroom change if people could admit their lack of momentum or dead-stops while the class waited for and or assisted the student? Or waited for and or assisted the teacher even?

[Answer] Amazing thought. Hard to picture. At least, it seems hard to picture happening for any length of time. You see, all student / teacher roles are inherently adversarial. Unless, of course, the students are more parrot than student. In which case, there is little to no conflict as the students simply take what the teacher is saying as true, mostly based on who the teacher is rather than on what the teacher is saying.

Oddly this parroting the "known great teacher" is the flip side of the coin of one of the worst fallacies

human beings perpetrate; argumentum ad hominem. Which in the case of teachers means simply that the teacher's teaching is false because the teacher has faults. Attacking the person instead of the argument.

Why don't people face their dead stops more often then? Because doing this is counter intuitive. Why? Because we are programmed to distance ourselves from pain rather than move closer, and this is true despite our logical urges to the contrary.

Some people might now disagree, saying they sincerely do want to be closer to others. And they do. Except that when the chance materializes, most people find excuses, then run for the hills.

The point I'm making here is that teachers teach students only when they fight the two kinds of teacher's urges. One. They must fight their urges to fall into the empty but easier path; getting students to parrot. Two. They must fight the even more difficult urges to make information more important than people. Spewing data more important than connecting.

Ironically, spewing data rather than focusing on connecting is one of the main things which sends students into dead stops. Too much to consider. Too little heard. Once these then, the teacher must work extra hard to get the student to learn.

As for your question then, would the experience of learning in a classroom change if people could admit their lack of momentum or dead-stops while the class waited for and or assisted them? Absolutely. And if teachers were taught to focus on the part of human nature which opposed this then it would be a wonderful change. Until this someone steps forward to make this happen though, it remains a beautiful but distant dream.

[Question 5] Can there be a true relationship between a student and a teacher without an honest discussion and understanding of the pain they will share as they struggle to learn and teach each other?

[Answer] Absolutely not. No honest discussion. No learning. Then again, this interplay may not need be done in discussion form. It might also happen within the bounds of a written essay or monologue.

The thing to remember here is that main thing needed is to establish, and occasionally renew, the teacher / student connection. Once established, this connection is the main gateway through which respectfully adversarial teacher / student exchanges may provoke new learning in the student and teacher both.

Finally, there is the idea that the teacher is supposed to learn form the student. In reality, this should focus on that, while the student should never carry the teacher's responsibility, the teacher, by connecting, should be constantly learning more ways to visualize the teachings. In this way, the teacher can maintain a high level of curiosity while at the same time, delivering a focused well designed lesson.

There's certainly a lot to being a teacher, isn't there?

Being a student is equally hard.



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Momentum Learning

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