

Dialogue Education Essentials - *Laughter*

Lately, Dr. Jane Vella, founder of Dialogue Education has been thinking a great deal about the GPS that keeps Dialogue Educators on course as we design and lead learning events. She's challenged herself and others with this question: *What are the essentials of Dialogue Education, without which it isn't what it says it is?*

"Suppose," says Jane, "we speak of D.E.E.: Dialogue Education Essentials. And when I say essentials, I mean it isn't apple pie without apples!"

Dialogue Education, says Jane, is a system - a somewhat mature system, but with all the chinks and weaknesses of any system. It is growing and developing – maturing, really – each time we do the solid research that manifests the usefulness and effectiveness of the system's components.

Dialogue Education Essentials: Laughter

A Dialogue Education event that did not ring with laughter would be suspect in my eyes. Laughter is a physical, emotional, cognitive indicator of safety, engagement, and the relevance of the content. Laughter is an indicator of the relationship at work in the small group, and of the group with the teacher!

Laughter is an indicator that the amygdala in the brain, which forces adrenaline into the bloodstream when a person is frightened or at risk, is at rest. A quiet amygdala is a physical, measurable sign of safety and of many of the other principles and practices of Dialogue Education! (Zull, James E., *The Art of Changing the Brain* 2002)

Laughter is an indicator to me that the human beings involved in learning together are not taking themselves too seriously. It is God's world. Isn't it great to have been invited along for the ride?

My friend Paula Berardinelli read a set of short stories I recently completed. "Jane," she said, "some of those stories were so funny. You have a future as a stand-up comic!" I had to be honest. "Paula," I said, "at this stage in my life, I'm afraid it will have to be a sit-down comic!"

What do you think about laughter being a Dialogue Education Essential? How have you experienced laughter during learning events?

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