

Please Do Not Discuss

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Discuss is a word I do not use. I will not discuss anything because I hear in that word a tone of: Listen to my perception! It is the right one!

Dis – cuss: *ORIGIN late Middle English ‘examine by argument’): from Latin discuss- ‘dashed to pieces,’ later ‘investigated,’ from the verb discutere, from dis- ‘apart’ + quaterere ‘shake.’*

So, in a discussion, we shake apart the issue!

That’s not what I want learners to do. I want to examine it, gently, humbly, reverently– listening to diverse perceptions with respect for the diversity in the room. Lavishly affirming each offering as honest, and congruent with the speaker’s context and stage of life.

My perception of an issue, at 84 years of age, is not that of my sweet grandson who is 22! I am still trying to learn to listen (and not interrupt), to accept his youthful perception as honest, to search with him through dialogue for all of the potential of the question or issue at hand.

We are not adversaries. I love to say: If you want to be my enemy, your work is cut out for you!

In a dialogue, we are fellow searchers, so the Learning Task is a series of open questions:

1. What one guideline do you use for yourself when you are designing a learning session?
2. Read over and mark these principles of Kurt Lewin.
3. What words or phrases in these principles moved you?
4. What one way might any one of these be useful to you in your designing and teaching?

Consider how more specific and useful these questions are compared to “Discuss the principles of Kurt Lewin.”

Discussion or Dialogue? You, as designer, do need to make a choice.



Selected Principles of Kurt Lewin:

- Effective learning will affect the learner's cognitive structures; attitudes, values, perceptions; and behavioral patterns. That is, it always involves cognitive, affective and psychomotor factors
- People will believe more in knowledge they have discovered themselves than in knowledge presented by others
- Learning is more effective when it is an active rather than a passive process
- Acceptance of new ideas, attitudes and behavioral patterns cannot be brought about by a piecemeal approach - one's whole cognitive/affective/behavioral system (ideas/feelings/actions) has to change
- It takes more than information to change ideas, attitudes and behavioral patterns.

I invite you to take a look at your designs. Wherever you use the word discuss in a learning task, try to put these ideas into action and see what you get! What differences are you now seeing that you didn't before?

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