

## Dialogue Education Essentials - *Safety*

by Jane Vella, PhD

The system that is Dialogue Education demands safety. Learners must feel safe with the content, with the teacher, with the environment, with their colleagues. The designer/teacher must feel safe with her partners, with her design, with the group of learners, with the environment.

Safety is not merely a nice aspect of the system: it is absolutely essential. The brain cannot work if you're not safe; when the amygdala is churning out adrenaline because a person is scared, mad, or sad – at risk, in danger – then synapses shut down and new dendrites cannot grow. No new learning.

Fear is never a tool or a condition for learning. Safety throughout a learning design invites challenge: Bring it on!

Safety is seen in the beauty of the materials, the sequence of the learning tasks, the visible relationship between partnering teachers, the relationships developing in the small groups and in the large group, the setting up of the environment, the fragrance of good coffee or cinnamon buns, the sharing that took place before the event in the Learning Needs and Resources Assessment, the positive framing of feedback, the timing of learning tasks . . . in short, the whole design, the entire system.

Did you notice how these principles and practices cling together, and connect? The shin bone connected to the foot bone...We can dare to call this an organic system, the means congruent with the end: learning.



(Originally published on GLP blog June 5, 2013)