

Topic: Learning to Love and Loving to Learn ONSAF CONFERENCE, 18 OCTOBER 2014

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Assumptions about favorable conditions for Learning

For learning to take place it is required: a) curiosity and motivation in general. This curiosity can be fostered in a social environment free of fear of punishment and/or judgment. Fear leads to shame, hostility and anxiety, the reverse of sense of belonging. So the question is how can the family and the school create an EMOTIONALLY SAFE PLACE where everyone involved enjoys calmness and inspiration to develop their capabilities and skills and at the same time experience empathy and other social skills in order to fulfill two basic human needs: belonging and individual expression.

Neuroscientists have provided the evidence that a loving and respectful social environment is a prerequisite not only for learning to take place but also for the well-being in general.

SOME BASIC PREMISES OF ADLERIAN THEORY

The Adlerian theory and practice provides the conceptual framework for building EMOTIONAL SAFETY. Emphasizes the need for acceptance and belonging as a prerequisite for functioning in life tasks: relationships (family, friends, community at large), work (in this case work is school work) and recreation. Healthy human functioning is achieved by addressing basic emotional needs such as love, mutual respect, and social equality. Misbehavior is a sign of discouragement. It is an attempt to find the sense of belonging, although in a dysfunctional ways (ways not in the interest of society). More specifically:

- No one is perfect, therefore we are empathic towards ourselves when we are not consistent with our social equality principles.
- In order to build a safe environment, we at least try to acknowledge using labels as a way of our thinking: right vs wrong, good/bad, bright/stupid, diligent/indifferent, generous/stingy, and responsible/irresponsible, competitive/cooperative. Instead, we focus on our expectations and feelings triggered by the behavior of others.
- We separate the deed from the doer.
For example, by saying "I like you but do not like what you are just doing" or "show me the other side of you, the part of you that paying attention a while ago".
We leave the identity intact. That way the child is less likely to be defensive.
- Not all behavior perceive as misbehavior is actually that. Our interpretation is blurred by our beliefs, expectations and self-image as parents and teachers.

- Encouragement contrary to praise (which is an evaluation) is an intervention that gives direction. By encouraging we stay away from exercising power and evaluations.

ACTIVITIES for Building a social atmosphere that serves the sense of belonging

Twofold goals:

- A) Building an emotionally safe classroom where empathy prevails
- B) Offering skills for individual students to regulate their emotions, develop a coherent mind and personal confidence.

We introduce *Loving to Learn and Learning to Love* to the students so that the students give meaning to these activities. .

Example: "this year in addition to the subjects to be taught, we are going to have group activities. We invite them to guess why that is important. We give also our reasons: in order to get to know each other better, to have fun together and make friends with each other.

The group cohesiveness is built gradually. The teacher uses her judgment and intuition.

We start from activities that do not require much trust and/or revelation. IT IS A GRADUAL PROCESS FOR BOTH US AND THEM.

B. There three types of activities: 1) interactive for the purpose of building group cohesion and emotional safety and 2) activities that quiet the mind

1. GROUP COHESION ACTIVITIES. Always consider the age and capabilities of the students. An initial activity is the Interview activity.
2. ACTIVITIES THAT QUIET THE MIND: we invite the students to quiet the mind by guided imagery. There are many ways of offering them guided imagery. You make call it "the safe place activity".
3. ACTIVITIES THAT ENHANCE BOTH THE GROUP COHESION AND THE INDIVIDUAL SELF ACCEPTANCE: example: focus on an event that provoked a certain feeling (ie joy). Draw it if they are small children or share the experience verbally if they are older.

MAGDALINI AGRAFIOTI CONDUCTS on the topic Learn to Love and Loving to Learn:

- **2 hour presentations**
- **One day 5 hour workshops**
- **Two day 5 hour workshops**
- **12 session of 90 minutes seminar for parents and/or teachers (separately)**

Next upcoming event: a 2 hour session of practicing activities for *Learning to Love and Loving to Learn*, on Tuesday 11 of November 2014 at 7 pm at 751 Pape Ave just N. of Danforth Ave. Cost \$20.00

For preregistration contact Magdalini Agrafioti at her office 416 466 9663 or

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