

# EDUCATION + LEARNING

In our early years, school is based on the old R & B method:

## RECEIVE and BELIEVE.

The teacher contains information, we simply need to receive it and accept it. We're tested – often – to make sure we're 'on track' with 'the average'.

This teaching method is called **PEDAGOGY**.

It means, roughly, 'leader of children'.

That method works for children, yes, and even some adults, but most adults and many children as they get older, learn in a different way. They no longer simply 'receive and believe', they now consider how what they are learning relates to their life today. They think about previous experiences they've had, and the perspectives they currently hold. This greatly influences the way we interact with the information and learn.

This is called **ANDRAGOGY**. It's the way older children and adults learn.

It is important to think about andragogy because WE CONSTRUCT OUR KNOWLEDGE. It is not 'given to us'. We decide which information we want to 'keep'; we incorporate the information in the way we want and we use it in whatever way is useful to us. We DECIDE what information MEANS to us. This gives us a great deal of power and ownership. Perception and belief are at the foundation of learning. *We do not see things as there are, we see them as we are.*

*"You ain't gonna learn what you don't wanna know."* John Perry Barlow

**Why continue to learn after childhood?** We never stop learning; we might as well learn with purpose!

### JUST A FEW REASONS TO MEANINGFULLY CONTINUE TO LEARN:

- To make sense of the world
- To combat the negative effects of
  - Fake news and deep fakes
  - Social media's behavior modification and emotion-hacking
  - The incomplete, emotional lure of the 'single story'
  - Dumbing us down ('Where is your expert?', "you just need a job – any job", "ask your doctor", "you can't do that alone", "you should fill your 'role'", "you can't fight city hall", "that's not your problem", and other limiting and controlling beliefs.)
  - Advertising, movies, TV shows, fear-mongering
- To disagree convivially; to listen, share perspectives, walk away, reflect on the conversation
- To get a job. Yes...education can be important for getting a job. It's just as important to get a job that is right for you as it is to get a job that provides the opportunity, now or in the future for financial success. We are not robots. We require agency, dignity, acknowledgement. Education helps us understand our needs so we can address them ALL, not just the need for income.
- To adapt, to be flexible, and to be resilient to prepare for a complex future!

And for many more reasons. We can do so much together. And we can learn anything we want!

## LEARNING WHAT WE WANT TO LEARN!

When we were young, we were educated as if we were an 'empty vessel', now we can learn as persons-in-the-world!

### **UNLEARN:**

Much of what we've learned, we received without scrutiny or a filter. We simply accepted information given to us, norms expected of us, and beliefs to orient us. This was enormously helpful in our early years! Without occasional reflection and re-evaluation, however, the information, that may no longer be true, can become 'calcified' or stuck, and we may even defend it by saying 'that's how it is', or that's the way we've always done it. With intention and effort, we can remove mental 'plaque' and open our minds to new and improved information!

### **HEUTAGOGY:**

Since we learn all the time, why not direct our learning to increase our opportunities, possibilities and success? We can seek information in a library, in books, through conversation, and on the internet. (Be very discerning when looking for information on the internet!! "Information" is just 'stuff' and does NOT include truth; that is for you to figure out.) Self-determined learning can include critically reflecting on our early learning and discovering deeper meanings now.

*"It's hard to learn when we think we know something."*  
– Peter Block.

### **UBUNTUGOGY:**

What we never learn in school in the U.S. is that we are constantly in relationship with everyone and everything around us. We are trained to see ourselves as 'individuals' who have to figure things out for ourselves. We are also taught that we are 'rational actors' and we behave in our own 'self-interest'. This is the story that continues to divide us. We can choose to let it go for the misleading falsehood that it is, and discover that our true nature is the balance between autonomy (agents in control of our destiny), and belonging (connected to others and the world around us). Creating a world that is fair and just for all IS in our self-interest! We will be secure and free, also!

### **EMBODIED COGNITION**

Our brains evolved with our body and our bodies evolved with the world around us. We experience life, and make decisions, based on feelings...so it's high time we recognize how we extend our cognition (thinking ability) to understand ourselves, others, and the world better! According to Erik Shonstrom,

*"Embodied Cognition research supports the idea that feelings and emotions are not obstacles to the process of rational thought, but part of it, inextricably intertwined. All decisions are "gut" decisions – they are formed, informed and carried out by the body and the mind in tandem."*

### **TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY (TLT)**

(Please find this information on the next page.)

## Styles of Learning

*Use one, some, or all!*

### **UNLEARN**

Letting go of the behaviors and mindsets that keep us stuck so we can transform the past, improve today, and prepare for the future.

### **HEUTAGOGY**

aka: Self-Determined Learning  
Learners decide what is important and act. They build knowledge on alone and with others. They learn the value of information. They listen, they ask questions to clarify and build empathy, they reflect, they consider others in their process. They also construct knowledge with them.

### **UBUNTUGOGY**

Learning through a lens of interdependence, knowing that everything is connected and that all learning must recognize, include and honor others now, in the past, and in the future. Ubuntuogy can be applied when we learn alone and when we learn with others.

### **EMBODIED COGNITION**

Learn how to "trust our gut."  
Developing an understanding of how we are informed by our body and our brain - together - when we 'think', including when we learn, pay attention, construct knowledge and meaning, and make decisions.

### **TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY**

The transformative learning theory (TLT) lens will equip learners with ways to foster critical self-reflection, challenge social norms, engage in dialog with greater confidence, and consider other perspectives, including changing their own.  
TLT supports capacity building, a deeper sense of compassion, and a healthy curiosity, to use as power-tools in a world of constant change, 'nudges' and emerging truth.

# TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY

created by Jack Mezirow

Throughout our lives, and for a wide variety of reasons, we may want to - or need to - change our perspective. Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) will help with this process.

*"When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves."*

- Victor Frankl

Transformative learning is perspective transformation, or gaining a different point of view. During the transformative learning process, we critically reflect on our prior interpretations and assumptions to form new meaning. Critical reflection is when we analyze past events by considering what worked, what didn't work, and why. Perspective transformation is achieved through disorienting dilemmas that lead to critical reflection, then discussed in rational dialogue and, finally, taking action.

Jack Mezirow argued that transformations often follow some variation of the following phases (while not all are required):

- A disorienting dilemma - something happens that was unexpected.
- A self-examination of feelings of guilt or shame.
- A critical assessment of assumptions in our thoughts, beliefs, or cultural norms.
- Recognition that our feelings are shared, and that others have also changed their perspective.
- Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions.
- Planning a course of action.
- Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing a plan.
- Trying new roles, new ways of seeing, and being in, the world.
- Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships.
- A reintegration into one's life using the new perspective in all areas.

## Why am I such a huge fan of Transformative Learning?

When I was in my early teens, I physically rebelled against authority by skipping school and running away from home. At that time in my life, I felt like all forms of authority wanted to 'mold' me; that they would never let me become myself. After 5 years of constant conflict, I said I wanted to become an emancipated adult. The answer was 'no'. Then I made a deal: I would calm down and go to school if I could live in a foster home and attend an 'alternative high school' called Walden III (it still exists today!). This was approved. When I got to Walden III, I quickly learned that I did not hate school, or 'authority'; what I hated was being disrespected. When I was able to learn in a respectful setting, and through a self-determined process, I flourished. I actually loved school!

## **WHAT ARE YOU CURIOUS ABOUT? WHAT ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT?**

These questions can not only guide you on a self-directed learning journey, but may provide a gentle introduction to changing your perspective. When we dig into any topic, and search for the many different points of view (we are almost always presented with only two - with us or against us – but there are always more than two!) we can – without the guilt or shame, learn to understand other perspectives. For instance, we could be curious about the internal combustion engine, but when we dig into the history and consider the future, we could learn about electric motors...and try on that perspective, and then learn about the impact of lithium battery production, and come full circle to believe that all we really need to do is to drive less. This is a super-simplified version, but it provides three strong perspectives that may provide a window into a person's world view.

*Changing your stance on a long-held belief will not be simple, but it might change your life completely!*

Please check out the Transformative Learning Process diagram on the next page.

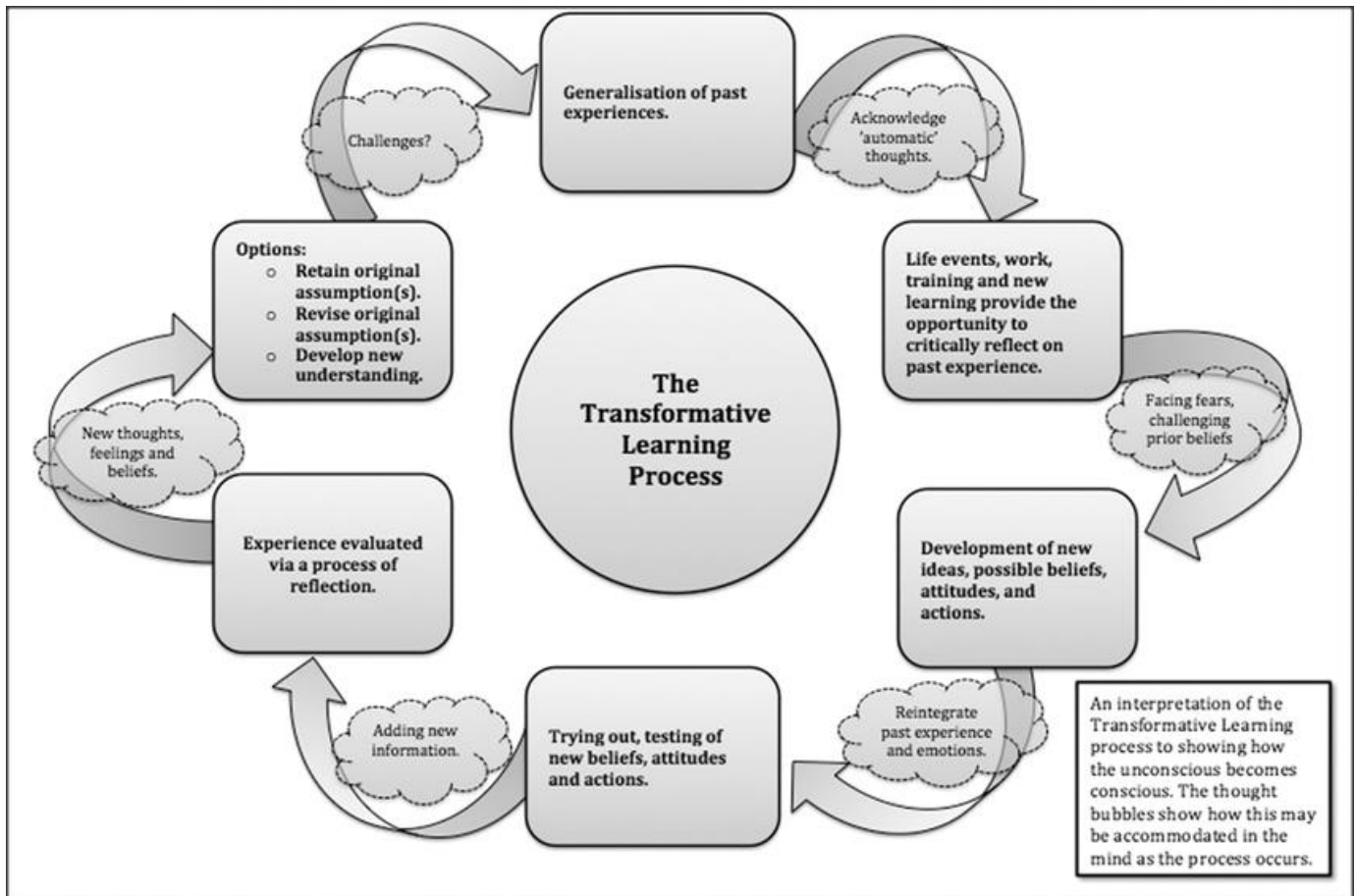


Diagram by Justin Sharp.

**To investigate this topic further, book recommendations can be found at the end of the Free School section, and at the end of the Ownership Manual. Look for titles by Jack Mezirow.**

Free and very inexpensive learning opportunities abound...on the internet, in our libraries and by talking with people willing to share their knowledge! We can purchase new or used books to share, we can study alone or in groups, and we can even get college credit for some of our learning through the CLEP exam ([www.clep.collegeboard.org](http://www.clep.collegeboard.org)) for \$95 per course! We can teach - and explore learning - with our children and our youth for free...and we can help them get the information that the schools do not provide. All ages can learn better together!

### EDUCATION FOR FREEDOM!

*We have a right to learn; "to create our own history".*

- Paul Bélanger, UNESCO

*How can anyone read history and still trust politicians?*

- Thomas Sowell

*The mind, once stretched by a new idea, never returns to its original dimensions.*

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

*Education doesn't need to be reformed – it needs to be transformed.*

- Ken Robinson

*The most potent weapon of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.*

- Steve Biko

*We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.*

- Albert Einstein.

*...the whole of life is learning therefore education can have no ending.*

- Eduard Lindeman

*At its best, schooling can be about how to make a life, which is quite different from how to make a living.*

- Neil Postman