



From the Back Porch

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The Dark Side

Let's look at *the dark side* of these important questions: What can we do as designers and teachers to kill the potential of the affective for learning? What actions, conscious or unconscious, can stop learners from growing in confidence and stop learning?

I propose three such actions: **plops**, **put downs** and **inadequate preparation**.

The "plop" is an excellent way to take the heart out of a learner. The learner says something, and the teacher acts as if she did not hear it. The teacher moves immediately to another topic or to her own experience. There is no affirmation of what was said, and there is no respect for what was said or for the person saying it. This sort of "plop" can be lethal.

A put down can be felt with a denigrator word or a quiet rolling of the eyes. It can be an epithet or an adjective describing another: *Stupid! Ridiculous! Wrong! Fat! Dumb!* It can be a response that begins with **But!** to any statement, refuting the learners' words and putting down the speaker. Put downs are known to be fatal in relationships and in learning.

Inadequate preparation is a kind of disrespect that can also take the heart out of learners. Failure to do an adequate Learning Needs and Resources Assessment (LNRA), missing the boat on the WHO (people at the event) and the WHY (reason for the event), not structuring learning tasks so that they are linked directly to the WHAT (content) and the WHAT FOR (learning objectives), and use only closed questions – all this can discourage learners and destroy their hope of learning.

This is indeed the dark side of learning, and we have all gone there. My intention in writing this is to make us all more conscious of the danger of "plops", put downs and inadequate preparation so we can be more aware of how essential the affective is to teaching and learning.

