

COMFORT
ZONE

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CHAPTER 1

Foundations of Teaching

SAFETY FIRST, DISCOMFORT SECOND

Students can't learn when they're comfortable.

We humans instinctively stay in our comfort zone—a literal and metaphorical space where everything is familiar and easy.¹ When it comes to learning, students' comfort zone is receiving the information they're used to in the formats they're used to, engaging it how they're used to at the pace that they're used to.

It's hard to get yourself out of your own comfort zone. That's one reason people take classes—to get information they're not used to (new facts, new perspectives), in formats they're not used to (lectures, academic writing), engaging it in new ways (group activities, portfolio projects) at a faster (or more deliberate) pace. Whether they know it or not, students come to you

because they've hit the limit of what they can learn in their comfort zone.

This leads me to conclude that, in order to maximize student learning, teachers must make students uncomfortable. Your job is to create a thoughtful, supportive environment that invites (or forces) students to attempt new challenges and learn from them. Reward risk taking, even if students are not immediately successful, because those risks help students get out of their comfort zone and break through old boundaries.

Get students into the discomfort zone as much as possible. That's where learning lives. (For tips on teaching this concept on the first day of class, see Chapter 4, "Teach the discomfort zone.")

What you should not do is push students into their alarm zone. This is where students feel unsafe and shut down. Watch out for when students grow silent or get angry. Even if they're not visibly distraught, they may be in their alarm zone. Forcing a student to do a presentation in front of the class, which he stammers through, red-faced, before rushing out the door, is an example of a student likely pushed into their alarm zone. (See Figure 1.1.)

When you see students get into their alarm zone, immediately change or end what you're doing. Transition to an activity they're familiar with, especially a solo reflection process like journal writing. You can use this as an opportunity for students to think about what they got out of the activity or to debrief what was so difficult about it.

On the other hand, don't panic if students occasionally get irritated or frustrated. An emotional response is the best indication that students are in their discomfort zone. The better you get to know your students, the easier it will be to distinguish discomfort from alarm.

When students succeed in their discomfort zone, they expand their comfort zone forever. The same goes for teachers, too.

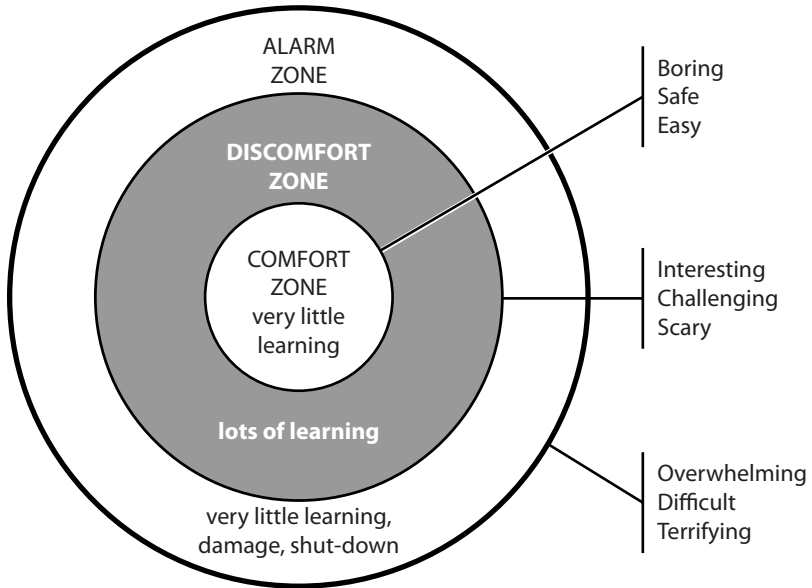


Figure 1.1 The discomfort zone

Source: Adapted with permission from Training for Change, 2012.

Hint: *Some students are in their discomfort zone just by coming to class. If so, build trust to get them into their comfort zone before pushing them out of it again. (See Chapter 6, “Build trust to maximize learning.”)*

BEING AN EXPERT DOESN'T MAKE YOU A GOOD TEACHER

Struggling with a subject helps you teach it.

Just being good at something doesn't qualify you to teach it. A Super Bowl-winning quarterback may actually have more trouble

coaching a high school football team than someone who never made it to the NFL. How can you understand your players' primitive mistakes when you've spent your whole life playing at the highest levels of the game?

Instructors who have struggled with what they teach may start out more insecure, but their struggle will make them better teachers. Take ESL teachers who aren't native English speakers. Without exception, they are better able to explain the rules of grammar because they had to painstakingly learn them all, instead of unconsciously acquiring English grammar as children. Many English language learners are more inspired by nonnative-speaker teachers than they are by some sucker who just knows English by dint of being born in the United States.

If you're reading this book because you want to teach something you weren't naturally good at, be reassured. On the other hand, if you want to teach something at which you are gifted, know that, in some ways, your struggle is just beginning.

Note: Struggling with your field of study also deepens your compassion for your students.

TRY TO SEE FROM THE STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Understand how students don't understand.

My first assumption about teaching was that it meant transmitting information to students. I was an expert in the English

language and my job was to upload that expertise to my class. It was a while before I could articulate how that wasn't the case. I gradually realized that my job was to maximize learning, which is what goes on within the student. My focus switched from pouring information out of myself to creating situations that facilitated students building their own knowledge.

In order to maximize learning, you must be able to see from the student's perspective. Your job is to understand every one of your students so that you can create activities that maximize each student's ability to learn what you have to teach.

The best use of my own English language expertise wasn't to simply explain vocabulary and grammar. I needed to gauge students' ability at any given task, anticipate mistakes they were likely to make, and create activities to maximize their ability to learn new material. For example, if I was teaching the word "too," it wasn't enough to explain the textbook definition of "an excess of, used before quantity words like 'much' or 'many.'" I needed to know that students often use "too" interchangeably with "so," which explains why a Muslim student once told me, "There are too many Muslims in America!"

The ability to imagine is one of your most important teaching skills. You must imagine how students will engage your activities, your assignments, and your subject as a whole. When students make mistakes, don't just correct them. Examine those mistakes to figure out how your students think about what you teach. In so doing, you will improve your understanding of each student's perspective, which will do wonders for your teaching.

Go beyond academics and imagine the entire student experience. Students have to negotiate their classes, the school bureaucracy, their interactions with other students, as well as their work and family lives. It puts your latest homework assignment in perspective.

Note: The “student’s” perspective in the title isn’t a typo. My intention is to try to see things the way each individual student does, and to tailor my class to each student’s needs.

FIND OUT WHERE STUDENTS ARE ON THEIR JOURNEYS

Models of adult development can help you understand your students.

We’re supposed to see our students as individuals. Each has goals and challenges unique to that student alone. At the same time, there is a lifelong journey common to us all. Seeing where each student is on that journey helps us understand where to help him or her go next.

Laurent Daloz introduced me to several powerful theories of adult learner development in his classic book *Mentor*. The one I found most compelling was created by William Perry, a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

After analyzing data collected on fifteen years of Harvard undergraduates, Perry theorized a linear path of adult learner development. It begins with freshmen college students expecting professors to simply pour knowledge into them. At this stage only a higher authority can tell the students what the truth is, and distinguish for them right from wrong. Lesser authorities—such as books, other students, or the students’ own insights—offer nothing of value.

A year or two later, after exposure to many contradictory facts and perspectives—and after changing their own convictions a few times—these students refuse to take sides on any issue.

Why bother when they (or the experts) will inevitably change their mind? “What’s the right answer?” is replaced by “It’s all relative, man.”

Senior year brings a final change. After countless lectures exploring various theories; classroom (and late-night) discussions showing how reasonable people can draw different conclusions from the same information; and term papers which make the students reflect on their beliefs, and then reflect on those reflections; the students learn to consciously use logical reasoning and personal conviction to construct a worldview they are willing to commit to.

Perry’s model students emerge from their four-year cocoon with the twin truths of a liberal education: there are always multiple legitimate perspectives, and you must choose the one truest to you. The student graduates more open to new truths but better able to discern falsehood. (To quote Professor Andrew Delbanco, “we might say that the most important thing one can acquire in college is a well-functioning bullshit meter” [2012, 29]).

William Perry depicts a magic ladder transporting adult learners from credulity to apathy to self-mastery. To his credit, Perry was also fond of saying, “the first characteristic of any theory is that it is wrong in any particular case.” (Daloz, 2012, 77). Humans are clearly more complex than any single model can account for.

I am only now, after ten years of teaching, beginning to apply these models of adult learner development to my students. No one expects you to master these theories before you begin your career. Having said that, by understanding the individual path each student walks and the intellectual approaches that map our many paths, your ability to teach will improve dramatically. For instance, when a student insists on knowing the one right answer, and thinks that you’re hiding it when you insist there isn’t one!

YOUR JOB IS TO HELP STUDENTS LEARN

I'm putting on my serious face for this one.

We all bring romantic misunderstandings about teaching into the classroom. These notions diminish us, our students, and our teaching practice.

Let's begin by discussing what teaching is not. Teaching is not about your feeling of satisfaction—although your feelings are an integral part of you and your practice. Teaching is not about students liking you, or loving you, or fearing you.

You teach to help your students learn. The degree to which they do so is the best measure of your success. If you focus on student learning, you won't waste time worrying about whether you're funny or creative enough, things you have little control over anyway. And if you're already funny and creative, focusing on learning will ensure that you go beyond entertaining your students.

To help students learn, you often have to teach them study skills: how to work in a group, study effectively, practice new skills at home, and so on. Ideally, these skills translate to life outside the classroom: how to work in a team, conduct research, make presentations, and so forth.

You may also need to teach “metaskills,” abstract skills that govern a range of concrete ones. The ability to deliberately choose how best to prepare for a quiz (like deciding between creating flash cards or forming a study group) is one example of a metaskill. Metaskills are inherently more difficult to teach but give students more agency as workers or learners.

Whatever you do, spend as little time as possible on skills unique to your institution—or your class: how to take a blue book exam, post to your class blog, and so on. There's no opportunity for transfer with those skills.

***Note:** You teach the way you learn. If you learn best by reading, you're likely to give your students too much reading. If you learn best by doing, you may not put enough big-picture perspective into your curriculum. Be aware of this bias. Your job is to teach every student, not just those who learn the same way you do.*

YOU TEACH THE WHOLE STUDENT, TOO

There is no such thing as only teaching information.

Adult education today focuses almost entirely on job skills. I respect the hell out of that. Students deserve to learn what they want, and teaching a specific skill—whether it's architectural drawing or cooking a soufflé—is a worthwhile goal.

And yet. Most of us teach because we believe that education can change our students and the world. This has little to do with job skills; instead, it's about helping people live more empowered and meaningful lives.

I believe there are opportunities to teach content and empowerment at the same time. When I taught workplace communication to a class of mostly black and Latino welding students, I created role plays where they had to negotiate with their boss to fix a dangerous workplace situation. For example, the class would read an accident report where a worker was killed when a metal I-beam fell onto him because it was standing upright on uneven ground. Then a student would role-play asking the boss (another student) to use a crane to move an unsafe beam. The whole class watched and gave the “worker” tips on how to be more persuasive.

You could say I was just teaching another job skill. Indeed, few things can delay construction more than a worksite injury.

But there are plenty of bosses who'd just as soon not have their workers know how to bargain with them.

The time spent on that role play could have just as well been spent memorizing Ohm's Law or some other esoterica. But I wanted my students to have more power in their lives. As was clear by the end of the role play, the skills you use to negotiate with your boss—active listening, logical reasoning, taking a stand—could be used just as well with authorities in government or in our families. The goal was not simply to make my students better worker bees but to give them more personal agency.

Some adult learners, depending on where they are on their journey, may resist your efforts to teach such abstract skills. But perhaps the highest art of teaching is finding the balance between promoting personal growth and teaching the concrete skills I implored you to focus on in the previous section.

TEACH FOR TRANSFER

Not for tests.

Few things in teaching are as thorny as transfer. Perhaps that's why it's so rarely discussed. Basically, transfer is the ability to apply classroom learning out in the real world. The conundrum is that it's hard to measure in the classroom what students can do outside the classroom.

True learning is when students incorporate what you teach into who they are. There are two challenges here. The obvious one is that students might not get what you're teaching. We'll talk a lot about that in the rest of the book. The less obvious challenge is that some students—particularly “good” ones—can memorize the material without being able to apply it. They are able to create a self-contained mental universe where they store and manipulate the information you provide without ever letting it touch who

they are. These are the students who can give you every form of a thousand Spanish verbs without being able to buy a soda in a Mexican corner store. They're the tennis players who can hit a good forehand in practice but always smash the ball in a match.

Another reason it's hard to teach "good" students is because they're expert in giving false signals. They do all their homework and perform well on tests without actually learning anything. Contrast that to "bad" students who don't even come up with an excuse for why they didn't do their homework. That's one reason it can be easier to judge transfer in bad students than in good ones. They won't fake it to make you happy. (Their candor can be refreshing.)

American culture assumes that tests measure transfer, but the facts don't bear that out. A 1999 study published by the University of Michigan Law School showed that performance on the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) did nothing to predict professional earnings or job satisfaction.² (They did find a negative correlation between high grades and test scores and community service.) More generally, a 1984 study found no correlation between grades in school and future earnings or job satisfaction. Follow-up studies have varied slightly without contradicting it.³

Transfer is why teachers hate teaching to the test. Good teachers prepare students for life beyond the classroom. Even if we can never measure how successful we are.

CULTIVATE INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea."

—Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Author of *The Little Prince*⁴

Many adult students go back to school due to extrinsic motivation—the pursuit of external reward. There’s nothing wrong with that. Extrinsic motivations—like wanting to earn more money—have pushed countless students out of their comfort zone.

Other adult students return to school due to intrinsic motivation: because they love the subject or they simply love to learn. Extrinsic and intrinsic motivations are both legitimate. But as far back as 1968, Malcolm Knowles theorized that adult learners inspired by intrinsic motivation learn better (Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner, 2007, 84). Although that has been contested, no one denies that intrinsic motivation is powerful.

I think that adult educators are biased toward extrinsic motivation. We constantly tell students how what we teach will help them make more money or otherwise be more successful. So try to foster intrinsic motivation, too. Teach students to love the subject by showing how it has helped make you a better person. (See Chapter 8, “Disclose thoughtfully.”) Or build a love of learning itself by explaining how long periods of apparent stagnation are followed by short bursts of intense progress. (See Chapter 3, “Progress is uneven; take advantage of this.”)

Intrinsic motivation is powerful. Help students cultivate theirs so they can sail the seas of autonomous learning.

LEARNING IS HARD WORK

That work can be as much emotional as it is intellectual.

I believe the primary challenge to transfer is emotional. Unless you teach in prison, whatever your students are doing in life is working for them. They’re functional and comfortable—and that means they’re comfortable with their own limits.

A big part of teaching is making students' limits clear to them, and convincing them that they can break through those limits. This can be scary. The student with a thousand Spanish verbs is great at memorizing vocab—and terrified to actually speak Spanish. He's more likely to keep learning new verbs than to start working on his oral fluency, even if that's what he really needs. Why mess with success? The tennis player with the killer backhand is able to win many of her matches. Why would she replace her most powerful tool with something inferior?

You're basically telling people to abandon what they know just to deliberately fail at something new. And failing at a task—especially one central to your identity—feels like being a failure. Failing in front of your peers, some of whom may intimidate you, some of whom you may hold in contempt, is even more difficult.

A big part of teaching is making students do the lower-level stuff that they need, rather than the harder, more advanced stuff they think they need. People primarily judge their skill level (and self-worth) by the most extreme thing they're capable of doing. The tennis player may think she needs to add a few miles per hour to her overhead smash. But what she actually needs is to use her forehand every match. Your job is to convince her that this isn't a punishment, or a demotion, but what she needs most to improve.

If students don't work hard, intellectually and emotionally, they won't learn. You can be a cheerleader or a drill sergeant, but either way you need to motivate students to do that hard work. Especially when the work is hard because it's easier.

***Note:** Students will never take an assignment more seriously than the teacher does. Show students that you're working hard and they'll work hard, too.*

ADULT EDUCATION HAS A POSSE

Which is to say it has a rich intellectual tradition.

Most of us happily stumble into adult education. Without the years of training required of other professions, we may never learn about the different intellectual traditions which inform the practice of adult education today.

Modern approaches to adult education in the United States begin with John Dewey. A philosopher, educator, and public intellectual, Dewey (1859–1952) pioneered the notion that student learning had to be grounded in experience, rather than rote memorization. Dewey’s model teacher would structure classes so that students had new experiences—in math, or science, or literature—that meaningfully connected to their existing life experience. This was important for children, but even more so for adults, who brought more life experience to the classroom.

Dewey believed the ultimate goal of education was to make people open to more learning, to fresh ideas, and to better making sense of them. Or, as Dewey put it, “No experience is educative that does not tend both to knowledge of more facts and entertaining of more ideas and to a better, a more orderly, arrangement of them” (1938/1997, 82).

Dewey is the granddaddy of American adult education. Figures like Myles Horton, cofounder of the legendary Highlander School, made social change central to experiential education—and vice versa. When black and white antisegregation activists from the South went to train at Highlander, they didn’t get lectured on the importance of desegregated living. Highlander simply assigned black and white attendees to share rooms for the week. This would invariably be their first experience living on equal terms with the “other” race (Friend, 1957).

Brazilian radical educator Paulo Freire also grounded education in students' life experience. He taught illiterate rural laborers how to read and write with curriculum based on the exploitation in their lives—part of a process he called “conscientization.” (It sounds better in Portuguese.) At the same time, he identified how teachers could be agents of oppression as well as liberation, by teaching students simply to be more efficient exploited workers, rather than to fight against their exploitation. This undermined Dewey's rosy assumption that education was an inherently liberating process.

A later generation of adult education authors, most notably Stephen Brookfield, further complicated the picture by identifying how even teachers with good intentions—using a curriculum based on social change!—could be oppressive. Brookfield analyzed the different ways teachers held power, whether they liked it or not, and how that challenged the practice of teaching democracy.

I agree with all of it and I struggle with it all. I concur with Dewey that education must be grounded in students' experience, and I struggle to make that actually happen in my classroom. I agree with Freire that teachers can oppress, and do my best to teach my students some ideas around community organizing while also teaching the job interview skills they signed up for. And finally, I agree with Brookfield that the specter of teacher power hovers invisibly over the adult education classroom like the ghost of grandpa in “The Family Circus.” But unlike Brookfield, I think the power that teachers wield is good for maximizing student learning.

We classroom teachers often have a chip on our shoulders when it comes to theory. We dismiss it as a luxury enjoyed by academics. But staying ignorant of the theories that inform our practice won't make that influence go away. Better to analyze and

consciously engage these ideas to take what is useful and cut out the rest.

EVERYTHING IN EDUCATION IS CONTESTED

Especially the stuff that is obviously true.

A lot of things in adult education seem obvious, and all of them are contested. Academics have built entire careers criticizing the common sense of our profession.

Now that may just be an argument against academics. I know that when I started teaching I didn't have time for any theories at all, much less for people disputing theories I didn't even know about yet. But with a few seasons under my belt I am more interested than ever in what the critics have to say.

One of the most provocative questions in adult education is whether learning should consist of more than acquiring new skills—particularly job skills. Stephen Brookfield, discussed in the previous section, concludes that if you only teach students the skills they need to do their jobs better, you're not teaching; you're just providing job training. In fact, you may inadvertently help keep students in the role society has set out for them, rather than helping them choose their own role (Brookfield, 2013, 86).

Feminist scholar Michael Collins goes one step further in critiquing, more or less, the Western take on adult education. He sees the focus on efficiency and serving businesses' training needs as working against the creation of a free society. Or, as paraphrased by Merriam et al., "adult educators are too concerned with how to plan programs or arrange a classroom at the expense of considering why some adults do not have access to education" (2007, 254).

The entire discipline of critical theory in education is dedicated to understanding education as a way to liberate people. This includes explicitly teaching students how to practice democracy and overcome the alienation in their lives (Merriam et al., 2007, 258).

Like many teachers, I pride myself on being able to teach concrete skills. It's important for that metric of success to be interrogated. In regards to education's purpose, I return to John Dewey: education should make more things matter. Education helps students make sense of their world and be able to choose their role in it. If your curriculum leads students down a steadily narrower path of specific job skills that help employers make more money from their labor, then you are training, not educating.

I do believe we need much more democratic decision making in our lives. To take just one example, as an activist I have gone to protests organized by the residents of the working-class black town of Richmond, California, to shut down the Chevron oil refinery there. In addition to contributing to the high rate of asthma in local children, the refinery caught fire in 2012, forcing a shelter-in-place for residents and sending dozens to the emergency room. And that was after an explosion at that same oil refinery in 1999!

With that said, as a teacher, I'd be hesitant to turn an ESL class in Richmond into a seminar about how horrible Chevron is. I would certainly write some stories for students about the company's role in the community. But to focus too much on Chevron, at the expense of English, is a loss to students who may not have the power to tell the teacher they're not getting what they need out of their ESL class.

I'm actually less likely to try to teach democracy because of my experience as an activist. I've developed my own practice of democracy through years of living collectively, through protests

in the street, and through countless, countless meetings. Although I agree with the critical theorists about the importance of creating a democratic society, I respect democracy too much to make it the focus of my English classes.

(To their credit, critical theorists admit that their ideas do not easily translate into classroom practice. You can skip to Chapter 10 to see my big-picture ideas on how to make education truly more democratic.)

***Note:** The fantastic education professor Jeff Andrade taught me how some teachers pride themselves so much on their belief in critical education theory that they never spend time actually learning how to teach. These teachers' radical politics actually diminish their teaching. Andrade's focus was on impoverished black and brown youth in the city, but I think his point applies to adult education as well.*

***Note:** I focused on democracy and teaching because the topic is so juicy to me. Everything else in education is contested, too. There are theorists who criticize whether the teacher should be a distant facilitator or a caregiver, whether education should focus on individual students or on whole communities, and even whether we need a separate class of people trained to be teachers (!) (Merriam et al., 2007, 235–238).*

THE TEACHER DEVELOPMENT CYCLE

Behold my theory of teacher development!

The definition of a model is a simplified explanation of a complex process. With that in mind, Figure 1.2 is my model of teacher development. Based on the Kolb Learning Cycle, this model recognizes the importance of reflecting on personal experience to developing expertise.

It's through this cycle that teachers learn. Let me give you a typical example: you create your first lesson plan, struggle to teach it, and, upon reflection, realize your objectives were way too ambitious, which makes your plans for the following class more realistic, and so on.

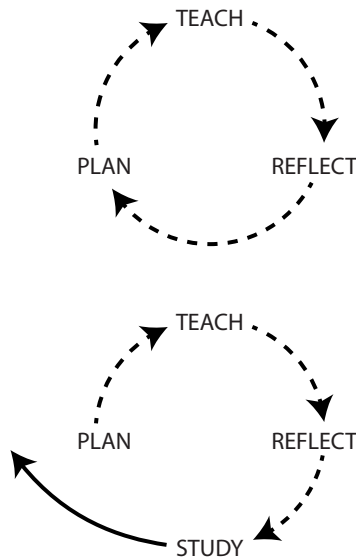


Figure 1.2 The praxis wheel

Source: Adapted from Kahn-Russell, 2012, 162–163.

There is no substitute for this deliberate process of planning, teaching, and reflecting. What this book offers you is a jump start. Through each section of this book, I'll show you how to improve your planning, your teaching, and your reflection.

TEACHING WILL MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE AN IDIOT

Or: A productive and inspiring way to approach your errors.

After eight years of teaching in the community, I briefly taught at a private ESL school for the first time. I thought I was doing a pretty good job. Then, after my second class ended, the academic director pulled me aside. One of my students had left the room, almost in tears, when I had criticized her for not doing her homework. I hadn't even noticed. (It turns out that students who pay a bunch of money to fly to the United States to study English have different customer service expectations than immigrants taking classes for free at their local community college.)

I felt like an idiot. And truthfully, that wasn't so bad. Every teacher feels like an idiot sometimes. The important thing is how you approach your shortcomings—with honest curiosity, without judgment. This is important because good teaching involves constant encounters with our shortcomings. We fail a lot, especially at first. A good teacher always reflects on why students aren't learning as much as they should be, and how to improve our planning and execution. (In the situation just described, I realized that even though it's okay to be a hard-ass about homework, if I don't notice how my students feel, I'm not doing a good enough job paying attention.)

Buddhists call the practice of always being open to learning new things “beginner's mind,” and deliberately cultivate it as part

of their spiritual practice. People have been making this lemonade for a long time.

Note: Teaching Will Make You Feel Like an Idiot was the original title of this book.

TEACHING IS A TOUGH CAREER THAT KEEPS GETTING WORSE

Today's bad times are tomorrow's good old days.

Teaching adults used to be a great career. Back in the day—say, up through the 1990s—it was reasonable to think you could pay your dues for a few years at an institution, teaching those evening and weekend classes no one else wanted, and eventually get tenure and a sweet job for life.

Those days have gone the way of the mixtape. The education industry is transitioning to a mass production model where de-skilled instructors teach more students for less money with no job security or benefits. There's a generation of older teachers ahead of us holding the best jobs—which would be infuriating, except that they can't afford to retire, and even if they did, there's no guarantee their tenured positions won't be replaced by two part-time ones, neither of which would go to you.

Current trends in the profession—less full-time work, more privatization, huge online classes, and a glut of teachers—don't bode well for us. There's increasing stratification between the large majority of mediocre teachers willing to work crap hours for little money who will burn out in a couple of years and really

excellent teachers who get their pick of interesting assignments for life.

Which path will you pursue?

YOU WANT TO BE A GREAT TEACHER

It's as important for you as it is for your students.

Being a great teacher—one who maximizes student learning in the classroom, grows as a professional, and contributes to his or her field—is its own reward.

Great teachers have more fun. They're relaxed in the classroom because they've prepared the day's lesson, know (generally) what to expect, can manage their students' class experience, and look forward to taking advantage of any surprises that come their way.

Great teachers get more out of their teaching experience. They notice what students say (and don't), which informs their understanding of how students learn. Great teachers take what they come across in their everyday life—current events, popular culture, literature, and lived experience—and apply it to their teaching. That's why great teachers never get stale.

Great teachers walk the long path of becoming expert in their field. They follow the latest research and understand their field from all different perspectives, because they have to be able to explain it to students who come from all different perspectives.

Great teachers are respected by their peers. They're not just the king or queen of their classroom—that's easy. Great teachers post, publish, present, and otherwise contribute to their field. This impresses their bosses, too.

Finally, great teachers enjoy professional success. They often work for a variety of employers, challenging themselves by working in different settings with different student populations.

The irony is that it can be just as much work to be a bad teacher as a great one. Lesson planning at the last minute, panicking in front of your class, toiling in wretched institutions, living in constant fear of losing the job you hate anyway . . .

You should aspire to be a great teacher or quit now. It's too much work, for not enough money, to be mediocre.

NOTES

1. I learned about the discomfort zone from the social justice trainer George Lakey of Training for Change. See the bibliography for more on his fantastic book, *Facilitating Group Learning*.
2. David L. Chambers, Richard O. Lempert, and Terry K. Adams, "Doing Well and Doing Good: The Careers of Minority and White Graduates of the University of Michigan Law School," *University of Michigan Law School Law Quadrangle Notes*, Summer 1999: 60–71.
3. Samson, G., Grave, M., Weinstein, T., and Walberg, H., "Academic and occupational performance: A quantitative analysis," *American Educational Research Journal* 21, no. 2 (1984).
4. This quotation comes from a translation of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Citadel*. In the original: "Créer le navire ce n'est point tisser les toiles, forger les clous, lire les astres, mais bien donner le goût de la mer qui est un, et à la lumière duquel il n'est plus rien qui soit contradictoire mais communauté dans l'amour." Saint-Exupéry, A., and Lamblin, S. *Citadelle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972).