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Creative Education

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[Presentation Report]

This one hour presentation consisted of examples of interactive processes and fun to assist people in learning about permaculture.

Based on the understanding that different people have different learning styles, as facilitators we need to account for the variety of learning styles which may be present in our group. We may be able to explain things rationally but not everyone can learn just by listening. Information can be integrated more easily for some by DOING and subsequently integrating a practical experience.

Robin and Skye have produced a teaching manual of processes which they are willing to share to assist people in teaching permaculture principles. They believe that our education system is so left brain oriented that we learn to become “half wits”! Permaculture requires that we use both sides of the brain, because we need design skills as well as management skills. Their teaching and learning processes encourage left brain/right brain activity, and also provide fun and practical learning skills.

Robin and Skye involved the group in some of their processes to demonstrate these learning techniques.

Mental relaxation process – to bring participants into the here and now. This process involved backtracking over the events leading up to the arrival at the conference. With eyes closed, participants are led through a guided visualisation process – to see themselves packing their bags and being on their journey to the here and now. They are encouraged to explore any issues they were involved in along the way that could be considered ‘distractions’. Then imagining that those distractions can be placed in a brown paper bag, the top folded over and the bag stored in a safe place until after the conference is over – or even thrown away! This process helps to clear the brain in preparation for learning.

Physical relaxation process – the group stands and walks around the room, casually making eye contact with each other. The facilitator leads an auto suggestion process where the group visualises their body parts becoming heavier and heavier. Starting with the left foot, imagining a creeping sensation of heaviness coming up through

the body, through the left leg, right foot, right leg etc, until the body feels so heavy it becomes immobilised. Progressive tension and relaxation of the various muscle groups can also be used to release tension and stress.

Learning game for permaculture principles – Robin and Skye have produced a card game based on permaculture concepts. The pack of cards consists of blue, purple, green and yellow cards which contain the following information:

- BLUE cards depict a word which is a permaculture principle – buzz word if you like.
- PURPLE CARDS show a simple definition of the permaculture principles contained on the blue cards
- GREEN cards give the official definition, as per Bill Mollison.
- YELLOW cards have a graphic/symbolic representation of the principles.

The cards are shuffled and given out to the group who have to match the sets of cards; ie, the principle, simple definition, official definition and graphic.

The team successfully collate the cards amidst much debate, discussion and laughter – learning about the principles as they interact. Each blue card is then presented to the group by the facilitator and the principle revised.

Cross crawling exercise – to integrate left brain/right brain functions. This process is like a physical tongue twister! It is an energiser – good to use after lunch or at low energy moments. The group sits on the floor on their knees (Vajrasana posture for those who practice yoga). The group sings a well know nursery rhyme (Humpty Dumpty in this case) while simultaneously carrying out hand co-ordination skills. To the beat of the rhyme, the hands are clapped together on the knees, in the air, left hand holds the nose and right hand holds the ear – then reversing the process on the next round.

Skye and Robin have been facilitating Permaculture Design Certificate Courses at Crystal Waters and around Australia for over 5 years. These courses combine many creative, fun and interactive processes to help people learn as opposed to teaching people by lecturing at them. They have also run many “Advanced Teacher/Facilitation” courses which assist people to become more fluent and confident using creative facilitation methods. Skye and Robin are also the authors of The Manual for Teaching Permaculture Creatively, now used in 16 countries around the world. It details many tools that the permaculture teacher can utilise.