

UDL in 15 Minutes
With Anne Bishop and Chantill Lopez - Part 2
The Transcript

LOUI:

Hello and welcome to UDL in 15 Minutes, where educators discuss their experiences with UDL. I'm Loui Lord Nelson, UDL, author, and leader. Today, I'm talking with Anne Bishop and Chantill Lopez, co-owners of The Embodied Business Institute. Today is a continuation of our conversation about how they are using UDL through their business and their training services. So, Anne and Chantill, thank you so much for returning for the second half. We talked about the basis of your business and, really, how UDL is the anchor of everything that you do in the first podcast. So for those listening, make sure you listen to part one because you get the whole history and that big "how," but now we're gonna get into the "why." So, you guys focus on the science of the nervous system and partner that with UDL. Can you talk about that pairing and the how and in what ways that makes a difference for teachers and students?

CHANTILL:

Yeah, one of the things I really love is that bringing brain science to the work of what we think of as transformation, right? Education, but on a very deep enriched level, means that we have, in my mind, at least an obligation and, for most people, I think, hopefully, an opportunity to bring the body into the equation. And so, our work around curriculum design, and our entire business really is not just looking at it from the brain-based perspective, but from the body-based perspective. And one of the most powerful ways that we do that, and we really foster embodiment, which I think can be kind of a woo-woo kind of fad, you know, term is from the nervous system. And that is my area of expertise. I've been studying the nervous system for the last 10 years or so. I've studied primarily with Dr. Steven Porges, who created the Polyvagal Theory. And one of his most ambitious, beautiful colleagues, Deb Dana, who's a licensed therapist and has brought the work of the Polyvagal Theory into therapy. And there are people in the body-based realm bringing the work into changing the body. But I think what's unique about what we are doing is that we are applying the nervous system to how do we tap into the body's wisdom and how do we allow that to support the learning experience? And beyond that, and maybe even prior to that, the relationship between teacher and learner. The experience within the teachers themselves, as that really is truly a precursor to what comes out of us, is what's inside of us. And then looking at the relationship between the two. And one thing I like to always say is something that I heard Steven Porges say in a workshop in New York, right on the cusp of COVID, was that the nervous system is the root of all behavior. We behave based on the unconscious expression of our nervous system. And so, our work is to not only support educators and entrepreneurs in bringing awareness to their nervous system state so that they can behave in a way that they desire, but they can impact physiologically another person, i.e., the student in front of them in a positive way so that the relationship of teaching and learning can be optimized, so that the brain can be optimized. And it's that marriage of brain-based work and body-based work that I think is so critical.

LOUI:

Beautiful, beautiful. So, we know that the nervous system is an important part of how we handle everything, as you were just referencing. But even more specifically, you guys talk about transitions. So how do you help people think about transitions and the nervous system and how UDL fits in there?

ANNE:

Yeah, so I'd love to jump in just as a segue here. One of the things that Chantill and I find that the nervous system work is so valuable within the context of UDL is within the self-regulation piece. Right? So, facilitating personal coping skills, and also obviously self-reflection and self-assessment. So, that's within that engagement category. And one of the things that we have learned through the nervous system work, which is so powerful, is that self-reflection or that ability to reflect on oneself actually supports someone's physiology to move into a more calm state or biological terms more of a parasympathetic state. And that is something that I've absolutely learned from Chantill, and what I liked so much about UDL is that it relies on the biology of the brain to support us in learning, but we don't only learn from the chin up, right? We learn with our whole bodies. And the context of how our bodies are, and our brain is we are we have embodied brains, right? So we're not just, you know, if you're hungry, you know, your brain is going to act differently. So that's, but also, if you're stressed or upset as a student or as a teacher, you may not teach as effectively, and or you may not learn as effectively. And so, one of the things that we really want to support people with is understanding like how the nervous system can connect to self-reflection and self-regulation. And self-regulation has to happen a lot when we have a transition. Right? So from a teacher transitioning maybe from one class to another, maybe transitioning from lunch, to back to teaching, or you know, maybe transitioning from, you know, teaching to home, right? And so, I'm gonna let Chantill step in here because she has insights to share with, with the transition piece because I do think that that's a big part of teaching and learning that can really be overlooked. We just expect ourselves to roll from one thing to the next or expect our students to.

CHANTILL:

Yeah, I mean, I think about it in the context of the classroom or any environment where even if we're shifting activities, I mean, the way we run our work, we are presenting, and then we're in discussion, and then we're in breakout rooms, and then we're entering back into group discussion. And even those transitions can tug on our nervous system in a way that can be dysregulating. And dysregulation, that stress response can look like racing heart, feeling agitated, feeling kind of racing mind or thoughts. It can produce all kinds of, you know, results. And so it's interesting always to me that we, you know, particularly like in the self-help realm, we think about like, well, we have to take care of ourselves first, which I am not debating, there is a place in time where that certainly is the hierarchy, but when we are relating to others, particularly in the teaching environment when our goal is to impact positive change on others. It is so critical that we are aware of our own nervous system state and we can regulate and there's so many beautiful body-based ways, simple ways to do that, that ground us in that from the polyvagal perspective would consider the ventral state, the safe state of calm and ease, is so important because what happens is, when we're in that safe state, we're in that ventral state of calm, we minimize the cost of transitions, and transitions are not just physical relocation.

There are mental-emotional relocation and their ideation relocation, right? The cognitive reunification from subject matter to subject matter or even just contextually, you know, how we're facilitating our education. And so when we can establish an awareness of like, well, what does regulation or that calm state feel like in me, we can actually call on it. We can foster it, we can expand it, and not only does that minimize the cost for us, we can flow from thing to thing. It also minimizes the cost of then if we become dysregulated. Like if we're transitioning, as Anne was suggesting, like from, you know, classroom time to lunchtime, priming ourselves and priming our learners to transition is so powerful, and then maybe somebody trips and falls out the door, you know, it is bleeding, and there's like been a cacophony of things happening. And we move in and out of regulation and dysregulation 1000 times a day. But the work that we're really promoting is how do I minimize the cost of that transition? And how do I return to that calm state more quickly? And then what that does is because I physiologically impact you, like right now the three of us are impacting each other, even though we're not in a physical space because you hear my voice, and the voice is a key component of nervous system regulation. But when we're in presence with somebody else, our nervous system is speaking to another nervous system. Like they're reading our body language, they're listening. They're hearing our voice. They're looking at our faces, and what the science proves is, is that those are components that the brain and body are taking in to say, hey, wait a minute, I'm not safe here. And then I'm gonna respond and behave, you know, from that basis, that's all unconscious. And so, you know, we can aggravate each other or we can calm each other. And so we're transitioning the value of being able to bring ourselves into that calm space so that we can minimize the cost of transitioning nervous system states and environments is critical. I mean, it brings space, it brings ease, it brings vitality both to the learning environment, so that both learner and teacher are filled are filled up, right, and it means that we can minimize the cost of the output so that we can transition environments more gracefully.

LOUI:

That's awesome. We are right here toward the end. But as you both were speaking, the thing that popped into my head is a small tiny example, the doorway effect, which I've known about for a long time, but of course, that's when your short-term memory goes blank when you've literally walked through a doorway. And when we are in that flow, when we are in that, as you said, the ventral state of calm, you don't really go through that doorway effect because you're in the present. See, you're okay. It's the doorway effect that awakens me when I'm here at home on the weekends, or actually wherever I am when I walk through the door, we all talk about it. Oh my gosh, you just forgot why we entered this room. Well, it's, it's a true thing. And it's a transition. And if you're not in that ventral state of calm, then yeah, the doorway effect is gonna get you. And to me, that is what I remember learning about that in my undergrad and it's always been like, it's like a mini wake-up call for me. Because then I'm like, oh, you know what? This means that you got a little too much going on, but I just need to get myself back into myself. Because I otherwise feel so scattered. So I think I've talked about that correctly. Did I talk about that correctly?

CHANTILL:

Yeah, yeah. I think so.

LOUI:

Yeah. Well, I appreciate this so much. We have hit our 15 minutes on our second, but I have the feeling you guys are gonna get quite a few contacts after this because it's been a beautiful conversation. I know it's opened a lot of people's minds to this connection and to a deeper understanding of the nervous system. We don't always get to talk this deeply when we're talking about Universal Design for Learning. And I think you're exactly right. This links so much into self-regulation. And when we're helping our students like express themselves, it hops right over there for executive functioning and it's a beautiful connection. So thank you so much for bringing this to me and bringing this to the audience.

CHANTILL:

Well, thanks for having us.

ANNE:

Yeah, thank you.

LOUI:

You're so welcome. So, for those listening to this podcast, you can find supplemental materials like an image montage with closed captioning, that montage with audio descriptions, a transcript, and an associated blog at my website, which is www.theUDLApproach.com/podcasts. And finally, if you have a story to share about UDL implementation for UDL in 15 Minutes, you can contact me at www.theUDLApproach.com. And thanks to everyone for your work in revolutionizing education through UDL and making it our goal to develop expert learners.