

# Dr. Heather Corwin's Teaching Philosophy

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Witnessing a person fight for what s/he/z needs is what makes theatre an electric and transformative experience. Theatre transcends time and social barriers to introduce lifestyles and points of view, offer choices, reveal human vulnerability, raise ethical questions, and provoke thought. Ideally, theatre gifts us with an enhanced understanding of humanity. Psychology examines motivation through behavior. Actor training and psychology examine the complexities of being human.

My teaching is founded in respect for each student: distinguishing learning approaches, honoring individuality, and encouraging each student to reach beyond his/her/their perceived potential. Where fears dwell, both of failure and success, skills and lessons are learned. When students fall short of their expectations and are frustrated, levity allows learning to flow excluding judgment. I strive to inspire confidence in my students so they can freely and personally express themselves.

Learning is adaptive and involving. Both teacher and student must enter a bond that informs and affects each party – a mutually valuable relationship. Simultaneously, I work with my colleagues to collaboratively instruct students as a team. I endeavor to model the collegial behavior I wish to instill in students.

Honoring the student's frame of reference obligates me to master an array of learning designs. We approach material through kinesthetic, visual, audio, and experiential learning. For example, journaling helps a student articulate awareness and abstract feelings, whereas doing dyad work is practical learning through kinesthetic and experiential formats. Performing is creative, energizing, exhilarating, and overwhelming. I enjoy passing on to aspiring actors the tradition of technique.

Technique will not teach talent; however, technique allows talent to thrive and grow. My delight and responsibility as a teacher lives in sharing methods of innovators. I serve as a guide for each student to discover his/her/their way into the material to integrate the lesson. Together, we explore the student's clearest way to develop a personal, meaningful craft. Talent on its own is a limiting factor; hard work, technique, and curiosity will propel the student into a successful professional career.

A safe space is crucial when learning. Viewpoints we bring into the room and the way we interact during classes need to be mindful. Students must feel able to take huge risks without the fear of ridicule or mockery, and at the same time remain open to observations to foster growth.

In this intersection of somatic psychology\* and actor training, students increase understanding of self. I promote deep personal examination because the facades of social norms must be known for honest vulnerability to exist – this supports “living truthfully under imaginary circumstances.” In order to create a character who may be very different from the actor, the artist must recognize necessary shifts. Defaults, patterns, habits, opinions, prejudices, perceptions, sexuality, and family dynamic are a few examples of what each actor needs to be aware of before s/he/z can make choices inside character creation.

In summation, my teaching philosophy is to cultivate the individual's self-knowledge, provide information and theories in appealing and available ways, rouse courage in students to be embodied and present, impart technical skills, create a safe and playful space, and prepare students for their futures – as trained actors and in life.

\*Somatic psychology is the study of the indivisible relationship between the body & mind.

“One learns  
by doing  
a thing;  
for though  
you think  
you know it,  
you have  
no certainty  
until  
you try.”  
~ Sophocles