Recommended Resources

Cognitive Dissonance and Motivated Reasoning

- *Mistakes were Made (But Not by Me): Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions and Hurtful Acts* by Caroll Tavris and Elliot Aronson*
- *Willful Blindness: Why We Ignore the Obvious at Our Peril* by Margaret Heffernan*

Reflective Practice

- *Mindfulness* by Ellen J. Langer
- *The Social Work Pocket Guide to Reflective Practice* by Siobhan Maclean

Intervening in Complex Human Systems

- *The Logic of Failure: Recognizing and Avoiding Error in Complex Situations* by Dietrich Dorner
- *Thinking in Systems: A Primer* by Donella H. Meadows*
- *Systems Change: A Guide to What It Is and How to Do It* by Rob Abercrombie, Ellen Harries and Rachel Wharton (Available at: https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/systems-change-a-guide-to-what-it-is-and-how-to-do-it/)
- *Dark Ages: The Case for a Science of Human Behavior* by Lee McIntyre

Adaptive Learning

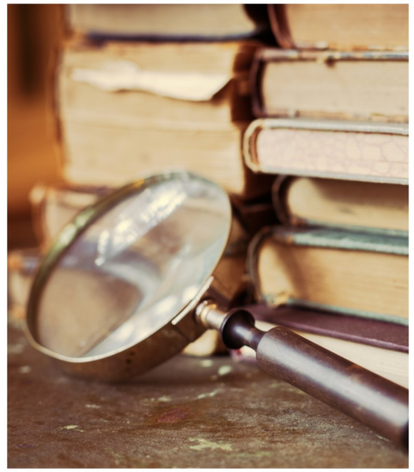
- *Surpassing Ourselves: An Inquiry into the Nature and Implications of Expertise* by Carl Bereiter and Marlene Scardamalia
- *Teaching Smart People How to Learn* by Chris Argyris

Case Studies

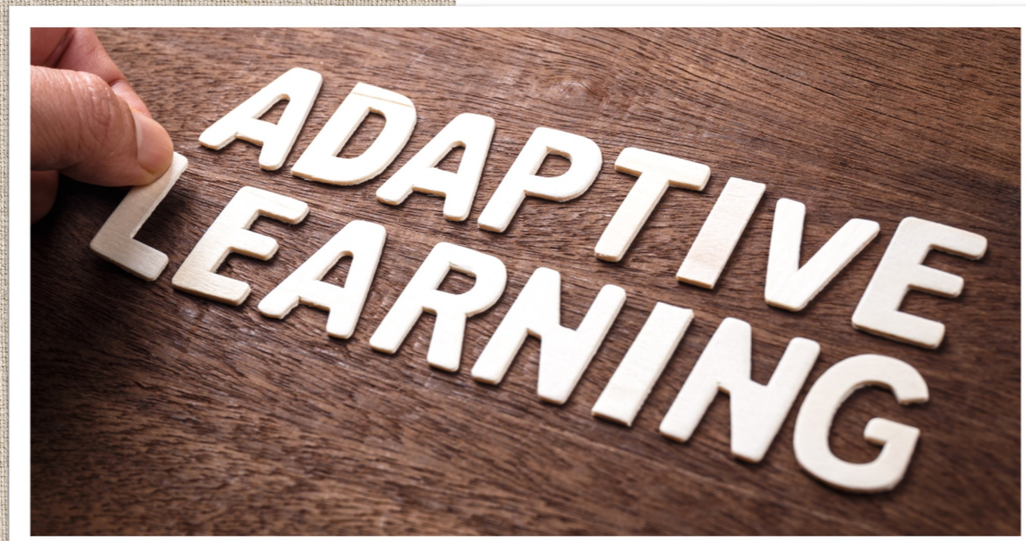
- *Freedom Writers* (Film)*
- *Jane Jacobs: Urban Visionary* by Alice Sparberg Alexiou*

Adaptive Persistence

- *The Dawn Wall* (Film)*
- *Seven Wonders of the Industrial World* by Deborah Cadbury (Now a series available on DVD)
- *The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic - and How It Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World* by Steven Johnson*



*Available through EPL



Facilitated by

Elizabeth Dozois

Word on the Street Ltd.

Calgary, Alberta

@ECALAyeg

We'd love to hear from you!

ECALA

Adaptive Learning calls for humility and openness, knowing there is *always* more that could be learned that would be helpful, and accepts that errors and failures are a necessary part of the learning process.

Conventional and Adaptive Learning

Conventional Learning

- Based on mimetics (i.e., copying established patterns of thought and action)
- Quick and relatively easy to learn (because someone else has already figured it out for you)
- Verification (i.e., how you know whether or not you're right) is based on whether your understanding conforms with accepted authorities (customs, conventions, best practice, orthodoxy, scriptures, etc.)
- Errors/failures carry social stigma
- Pragmatic and narrow in scope *(e.g., Will this solution solve our immediate problems?)*
- Tends to shut down curiosity/ inquiry and cultivate a misplaced sense of confidence in our understanding of the situation
- Focus on form (surface-level details)
- Limited diagnostic and design (innovation) capabilities

Adaptive Learning

- Based on a need to develop new patterns of thought and action
- Slow and difficult (!!!)
- Verification is based on the degree to which your models correspond to the real world
- Errors/failures are accepted as a necessary part of the learning process
- Governed by long-term perspectives and the ability to prevent problems *(Will this solution create problems down the road? How could this problem be prevented in the first place?)*
- Calls for humility and openness, knowing there is *always* more that could be learned that would be helpful (The more you know, the more you realize what you *don't* know)
- Focus on function (casual dynamics; how things actually work)
- High level of diagnostic and design capabilities

Adapted from: Low, K. 1993. "Levels of Understanding" in *The Human Venture & Pioneer Leadership Journey Maps,* 13th edition (Calgary, AB: Action Studies Institute, Leadership Calgary and Human Venture Institute, revised in 2013), 58.

Three Barriers to Adaptive Learning

Barrier #1: We see what we want/expect to see

Known Issue: Explanatory stories have the most power and appeal when they fit our inner world of hopes, fears, reassurance needs, allegiances, habits and prejudices.

What It Takes: The ability to manage biases, beliefs and defense mechanisms.

Notes: _____

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Barrier #2: Emotional responses to complexity and uncertainty

Known Issue: One of the most difficult aspects of adaptive learning is that it generates feelings of frustration, incompetence, and uncertainty.

What It Takes: The ability to predict and prepare.

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Barrier #3: Underestimating the depth of understanding required

Known Issue: We underestimate the depth of understanding required to intervene in complex systems (and the time and effort it takes to cultivate that).

What It Takes: The confidence, time, and capacity for effective inquiry.

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