
BFL techniques for skills practice?

Posted by jonathanstevens - 2009/08/04 16:35

Hi all

I'm a bit of a 'lurker' on forums (fora??) and this one is no exception. I peruse plenty but post little, as a rule. However, I'm seeking therapy for that, so you may see more of me as time progresses!

As for this posting, I'm trying to make up for my reticence in the past. So if you have 10 mins (20 if you're going to answer me!), grab a coffee, put the phone on divert and plough through the following... :-)

I use, and have always used, a smattering of brain friendly techniques (small 'b', small 'f') in all my training.

I attended Maximising Impact recently and had a whale of a time - and learnt a whole load more Brain Friendly bits (big 'B', big 'F'!!) It was timed perfectly, as I have some softskills courses to develop during the Summer, and I'm looking to consciously use far more BFL elements than I have done in such courses in the past.

My actual question ("what so soon?" I hear you ask) is:

> What are some of the ways to make the PRACTISING of soft skills more brain friendly?

I'm talking about the exercises / role-play / writing activities etc - where participants seek to APPLY & DEMONSTRATE their learning, as distinct from the bits of a course that are to do with participants actually ABSORBING and MAKING SENSE of the learning itself in the first place.

An example:

1)

Participants are to learn a "5 P's MODEL" for writing persuasive documents (eg reports / recommendations / proposals):

Position - Problem - Possibilities - Proof - Proposal

2)

You use BFL techniques to help people learn, understand and reflect their grasp of the KNOWLEDGE itself:

Some sing it, some act it out, some discuss it in pairs, and some draw a poster.

3)

Now you want participants to actually write a brief one-page report, or sales pitch letter or whatever, using this approach. Perhaps you want to review these as a class, or leave people to review their own, or maybe you'll discuss them one-on-one with each participant. But the point is, they're supposed to be trying to USE their learning, not LEARN it.

QUESTION (reprise!): are there any ways to make THIS part of a course explicitly more brain friendly than the same exercise slot in a non-BFL course would be?

Similar examples would be:

> a 2-minute presentation seeking to use more eye contact and fewer 'ums' and 'ahs';

> a demonstration of handling an irate phone call by matching vocal pace, volume, speed etc, then leading to a more relaxed tone, slower calmer pace etc

> a similar demo showing the use of active listening skills

... indeed any demonstration of the use of things like a communications model, the stages of a process, the elements of a best practice skill, etc.

So, there you have it. My inaugural question on the forum.

If you've read this far, my deepest thanks.

If you've got a comment, answer or opinion - still more thanks, in anticipation!

Bye for now.
Jonathan

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Re:BFL techniques for skills practice?

Posted by B1B*Ann - 2009/08/07 15:14

Hi Jonathan

Welcome to the Forum!

Speaking as the whale in question on your Maximising Impact - sorry misread that, you had a whale of a time, not you were taught by a whale!

I'm going to share my thoughts briefly, because you have almost answered this for yourself.

What you're asking about is step 5 in the MASTER process - Exhibit Knowledge - so the fact that you are following the brain friendly model means the whole experience has been brain friendly so far for your learners.

So you don't need to artificially brain friendly this step because experiential 'doing' is brain friendly in itself.

From your examples, someone giving a presentation is using at least 2 senses, and 3 intelligences, similarly with writing a 1-page report, or handling an irate phone call etc.

What to me is really important is that you are building in the vital part which is regrettably still so often missed in information delivery - actually practising the new skills/knowledge/behaviours in a safe and supportive environment. Simply being 'told' what is required just doesn't work and wastes individual and organisational time and money!

Have confidence in the instincts you have - I say this from this and other questions you've posed us - we know your learners on your new workshops are going to learn loads - and really enjoy their learning too!

Thank you for participating and your feedback and Good Luck with your new contract.

Ann

P.S. Just in case any readers who have not attended Maximising Impact think all we do is have a whale of time - Jonathan was part of the group we wrote about recently who achieved an average 90% retention of their learning (thereby thrashing the Ebbinghaus research), so there was lots of serious learning too!

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