

[00:00:00] Bonni Stachowiak: Today on episode number 359 of the *Teaching in Higher Ed* podcast, Beth Cougler Blom joins me to talk about her book, *Design to Engage*.

[music]

[00:00:15] Production Credit: Produced by Innovate Learning, maximizing human potential.

[music]

[00:00:24] Bonni: Welcome to this episode of *Teaching in Higher Ed*. I'm Bonni Stachowiak, and this is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to improve our productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

Beth Cougler Blom began her career as a training coordinator and soon became a trainer and then facilitator herself. Both as an employee with other organizations and through her own learning design and facilitation business when she began in 2011. Beth has helped clients large and small in all sectors design and facilitate great learning experiences, face-to-face, and online.

Beth has been an instructional designer for the teaching and learning center at Royal Roads University and in the nonprofit sector. She teaches learning design and facilitation in publicly accessible courses through her own business and for select post-secondary and community environments, as well as for private clients.

In her work for community organizations and higher education institutions, as well as for corporations, government and healthcare, Beth has discovered how facilitation of learning could be and should be enhanced. Beth lives outside of Victoria, British Columbia with her husband and daughter. Beth, welcome to *Teaching in Higher Ed*.

[00:02:04] Beth Cougler Blom: Thank you so much. I'm so happy to be here.

[00:02:06] Bonni: I know that we both have known a little bit of each other's work for years now, I think. I've come across yours a long, long while ago and was so happy to hear about your book coming out and you were so kind as to send me a copy and to read it voraciously and got so much out of it. Thanks for joining me today for a conversation about it. I'm sure we won't stick just to the book, but to other things that come up as well.

[00:02:29] Beth: Yes, absolutely. I've been following your podcast for years, and I know my friend ... here in DC has been on your show before, and I've just really appreciated learning from your guests and yourself over the years. Thanks for what you do as we start off here.

[00:02:44] Bonni: I don't think I realized that you two are friends. That's wonderful. Well, I always like it when I get to have a conversation with someone where I feel like I know a little bit more than just whatever that moment is bringing about, but I'd like to start out just by looking at intentionality and then how important that is to you in terms of designing something for learners.

[00:03:05] Beth: It's so important. I think about intentionality in a lot of different ways. Some of it is around the content, what is the content that we're going to teach or facilitate learning around and how do we bring intentionality to what that is? It's turning our minds around on that too, because often in my work as a learning designer or instructional designer, I'm helping people think of not just state what they want to teach, but how are they going to help their students or their participants learn and that backwards design piece.

What are those people going to come out of the experience with and being really intentional about nailing that down? A lot of people haven't really, they haven't learned how to do that yet, that piece about articulating outcomes. Some of that good work that we can do together and myself and another person or for my own teaching, trying to nail that down, what is it that we want for that behavior change or that non changed by the end?

Then, of course, how do we get people to do that? For some of the people that haven't taken education as really haven't done the classes or read the books themselves about how to do it. That's really a key unlocking for them of how to approach design of learning. There's pieces around intentionality with learning design. Then there's how we show up as human beings too to the learning environment wherever that is face-to-face or online.

[00:04:37] Bonni: Both of these things are just such big elements of being a teacher. You talk about that backwards design beginning with the end in mind. A lot of people struggle with that because they want there to be room for the ending not to be in sight when we begin.

What do you coach people around when, if I definitely know where we need the land and there's really measurable things or that there are going to be things that emerged that we never could have planned because we don't know who the learners are and what's going to happen when we begin to build that community.

[00:05:15] Beth: That's one of the things people say when they speak against learning outcomes, like outcomes-based learning, isn't it because they want to leave room for those emergent things to come along the way. I, too, want that but I want to start with outcomes still because I feel like I want a plan, but then to be flexible within that.

Otherwise, we're just, I always call it throwing spaghetti on the wall. We're just showing up like my old-- I took history as my first degree and people just show up with their ream of notes and flunk them down and start talking. I think we can do

better than that. I think we should come with a pretty solid plan and know how to get our learners there.

Then if something in the classroom, whatever that classroom looks like, that we feel that we need and our learners need at the time, I think we do have to leave room for that flexibility. It's a bit of both, isn't it, like the art and science of learning designer teaching. We've got a plan, but then we can be flexible within that and hopefully, there's always another next session, if you're teaching a longer course.

There's a next session to continue to go back to the original plan, but you veered where the group needed to go and maybe that's the thing. We were always making decisions, does the group need to go in that direction at this particular time? That little voice in the back of her head is helping us say yes or no to that or sometimes we ask the group, but it's a balancing act, isn't it?

[00:06:41] Bonni: Oh, I just think it does have to be a both, and either extreme, I think is not going to lend itself to what's possible when you bring together a group of people like that. I've been experimenting a little bit. I guess I first wanted to say that I don't think it works super well to bring a group of people together and be like, "Hey, what did you want to learn?"

I was going to say I haven't had success, but candidly, I haven't ever given my full oomph to it anyway. Just the idea, if you were going to take a class, I'm wrapping up a business ethics class right now. What do you want to learn about business ethics? Well, in a lot of classes we might teach, they wouldn't even really know what the possibilities were.

Especially if I'm thinking about [laughs] at our dinner last night, I'm not going to go into a lot of detail, Beth, because it would be really embarrassing for me and I've embarrassed myself a lot on this podcast and I don't want to do it purposefully. I'd rather have it be on accident, but I really revealed to my seven-year-old and nine-year-old and husband how little I know about space and about our travels to the moon.

It was rather embarrassing and if you asked me, what do you want to learn? It's going to be really limited because I just don't know that much about that body of knowledge. Anyway, I was going to also mention that I have been experimenting and this particular class, having a learning outcome about asking them to reflect throughout the class and explore opportunities to change their mind about something.

[00:08:15] Beth: Yes, absolutely. You're right. People don't know what they don't know, but if you provide the container and then give them the space within that container to share what they know or ask the questions that they have about it, I think that's where people fall down sometimes, isn't it? They provide the container, then they don't actually let anybody participate [laughs] in the experience.

It's like we have-- in my book I say, learning outcomes is shooting an arrow towards a target. We have a target that we're trying to hit, but then we have to figure out how to get people there and let them participate in that and figure out what they have to share and assume that they come with something to share.

Whether it's about actual topic or something that's related, maybe something that's in a different field that actually does apply because it's the same sort of thing or it's learning that we can bring across fields or something. Flexibility within structure, I suppose, is an art.

[00:09:12] Bonni: What kinds of things come up for you when you've seen people struggle with issues of how we show up in learning spaces and places? What are some of the areas of challenge you've seen people have?

[00:09:25] Beth: I think one of them is that they come to teaching or facilitation, and they think that they have to show up as the extreme expert. That has it all figured out, that can't make mistakes. Just has to have all the answers. I really want to show up as a learner, as well as a facilitator of learning and, yes, of course we have expertise in the topic.

That's why we've been asked to teach the course, for example, or the workshop, but to recognize that we're all still human, we're also fallible and there are places

where we don't know. In fact, it actually helps our learners if we say more about where we're still struggling with the content or where we are still taking risks and challenging ourselves to learn more about the content.

I think people want to see our vulnerability in a way. They want to see that we're human beings as well as teacher and that we can make mistakes and recover from them. We'll all get there somehow together as a group that we've got them. We've come with that intentionality.

We were talking about plans, the experience with intention, but that we don't have it all figured out all the time and we probably never will, but together, we're going to do our best job and keep learning. Keep learning, that's what I want for all of us all the time. To be real and human about that.

[00:10:56] Bonni: It's been a while since I have taught in a classroom. One of the things when I've coached faculty over the many years is, it comes up a lot with women specifically, is that we can sometimes have a tendency to over apologize for things. If the technology, if you can't get your dongle thingy to work right, and you can't get the projector working, that we don't have to narrate that portion of our life, where things aren't going the way we want, that we could actually just be silent for a moment and try to figure it out.

I don't want to sound like I'm suggesting that people play tricks on people, but it's more about anything that might distract from the learning experience. I would always suggest we have some kind of a plan B. If you can't get the sound to work or you can't get the projector to work, that there's some kind of a plan B and we don't necessarily have to always tell people that we're going with our plan B.

Part of this is, I think we're on another both and perhaps, Beth, that I both need to come across as credible and competent so that we can have a safe enough environment that we can fail. I both want to show up as fully human that I can make mistakes and humble. It's a really, it's a tough juxtaposition to hit.

I'd love to hear you talk a little bit about how you've found your way in being able to do what works for you. Then also what you've seen as maybe different for other people and how they find what works for them and and all of that messy stuff.

[00:12:23] Beth: Sure. Yes, it is messy. I think it's like a spectrum or something like that, isn't it? You can't show up as a complete basket case, can you, because you already lose all credibility. There is a sweet spot maybe that we have to find between authenticity and professionalism or have a redefining of professionalism, what that looks like.

Professionalism can be showing our fallibility sometimes. I have a situation in my teaching or my facilitation than other people, because I teach about teaching and I teach about-- my topic is about helping people learn how to teach and facilitate. I have to drop the curtain. I call it a little bit more often than other people who might be teaching writing or science or whatnot.

What they might want to benignly cover up their mistakes in some ways, a little bit more than I, and keep going with plan B and no one will be the wiser. In my work because I'm working with facilitators and faculty members a lot, those are almost exclusively who I have in my workshops, I have to drop those curtains and show them when I've screwed up, because they need to see that you can fail and it'll be okay.

That happens to all of us and we just keep going and figure it out. In fact, I do facilitate community agreements or group agreements at the start of almost everything I do, especially online these days. One of my group agreements is, weird things will probably happen. Let's roll with it. Just expect technology is going to do some weird stuff and we're going to roll with it and it'll be okay. I'm setting the scene that we all can handle anything that particularly technology throws at us right now.

I do find dropping the curtain. It is very vulnerable and it's something I still wrestle with myself, because you end the session, you look back at and go, "Oh, yes, I not only made a little mistake, but I had to tell everybody about it," because I want them to learn about the mistake. It is hard to do that, you just going to keep

showing up and being vulnerable and doing it over and over again in this work. That's the growth of this career I think too.

[00:14:53] Bonni: You are talking about the fear of not having all the answers. That is an interesting journey for me to think about when I have professionally entered into a new domain, I see those fears. I observed those fears in myself, elevating, and then there's this strange and I can't quite figure out, but I think it might have something to do with what's called the Dunning Kruger effect.

I don't know if you're familiar with these researchers, but it's the idea that you know a little bit about something and your confidence is overinflated. Then as soon as you get to know a decent amount you realize you know nothing at all. I feel like a lot of times when I've entered into a new domain, that feels really uncomfortable, then I'm more feeling like I'd have to have all those answers.

Then once you even just get past your ankle depth, any domain you go, "Oh, my gosh, well, how could anybody think that they had all the answers?" I was just listening to a podcast interview the other day, he's actually a Catholic theologian, his name is Richard Rohr. He's been doing all these beautiful exquisite podcasts and they were coming to a close, he's probably not going to be alive for too much longer.

It was really just this beautiful intimate conversation among three friends that had all this dialogue over all these years, which now is coming to a close. It was the final episode where they looked back at all their conversations and he's written, I don't even know, I'm going to guess something like 20 books and still they'd asked him a question and he'd go, "I don't know."

I just love that, that really, when you do seem like you might know a thing or two about something, you just realize how vast any domain of knowledge our experiences is. It's hard to-- I don't know, I've had a hard time trying to help other people through that fear. I do know it's a very real fear.

There certainly are techniques. Do you have things that you advise when it comes up where they are just this dense fear of, "Oh, my gosh. What if a student asks me a question and I don't know the answer," how do you advise that as a facilitator?

[00:17:06] Beth: Well, sometimes I use it as a facilitative technique. Remember, I'm teaching people who are also facilitators, but I think you would do this with students too, that you would turn it around to the class, and just say, "Huh, that's a great question, what does everyone else think first?"

That's a really easy tip to just even buy yourself some time while your brain works on it in the backend, trying to figure out what you would say if you had to respond to it. Isn't it more engaging to turn it around to the group whoever's in the group and say, "Hmm, I don't know. That's a great thought. What do people think about that? Let's see some hands or something."

Turning it around, like don't we answer all the questions sometimes too much as the faculty member or the facilitator. Probably, you should turn questions back to the group more often that they expect us to ask. I've written my book about, what do I call it? The teacher attention is that often people show up, often adults show up to an adult education experience and they want, they expect that the teacher "will answer all of the questions".

I've had feedback in my evaluation forms where they were frustrated that I wasn't the one to answer all the questions, but I don't want to answer all the questions and I shouldn't answer all the questions. Should I? I should, because that's not as engaging as turning it for the group to mull around together. Sometimes I talk about the pull versus the push.

When we're new to teaching and standing up in front of groups, we often just push information and content at people. Over time, you learn to ask amazing questions, the questions that people can't help, but answer or engage with to pull information and experience and ideas from group.

That pull versus push I think is a great back pocket tip to give a new facilitator or a new faculty member because they don't have to have it all figured out. Sometimes we just have to have the right questions, not all the answers. Don't we?

[00:19:13] Bonni: When I was 22, I was teaching computer applications classes. I taught a lot of Microsoft Excel. I remember someone asking me, "How many characters can you fit in one of those columns?" I was stumped, I had never been asked that question before. I panic, panic, panic in my brain, it turned out that the question that they really wanted to ask is how do I widen the width of these columns?

Since they didn't even know that was possible, they just wanted to know, "What are my limitations." I found it sometimes helpful to politely ask, "Can you give me an example or tell me why you would want to know that information," without making the person seem defensive. So many times, questions are asked because we don't have an imagination big enough to actually know the real question we want to know. Once you know, you can expand the width of those columns [laughs] and all of a sudden, how many characters? Well, it would depend on what font you were using and depend on what characters, because we have proportional spacing and a capital E is much wider than a capital I or the number one or [laughs] whatever. Sometimes that can be helped too.

I do think it goes back to what you spoke about in the beginning as showing up as human beings. That if we start to tell ourselves in our head that we're to be expected to know every answer to every possible question, that's a really dangerous place to be, I think living our lives let alone before taking on a role as teacher or facilitator.

[00:20:44] Beth: I think if we can all take that into teaching and learning situations, does it take the pressure off? That we know a lot because that's why we're there. That's why we've been asked to be there, but we don't have to know at all because we'll never know it all. You can take that to the bank.

It's a journey, we're all on it, and we're all learning from each other. We've got colleagues in the field, we've got your podcast, we've got other books and there's always so much more to learn. We can never know it all, but I think that's why I'm in the field, to be honest because I don't want to be in a field where I'm not learning anything new ever.

This is why I'm in teaching and learning, and I'll be in it for my whole career because of the shifts and the journeys and the new explorations, especially around technology, with educational technology. There's just so much to explore and learn all the time.

That's why I'm in the whole game, and that's the exciting piece. I can really get on my soap box about the-- It's like the passion. We should be in these roles if we're passionate about learning, not just for our students or our participants, but for ourselves. That makes a great teacher or a great facilitator of learning.

[00:21:58] Bonni: Another big area that people get challenged with, has to do with timing. It can go both directions, as you know, speaking [laughs] of a spectrum of things, everything from, I just try to cram 13 things into what could really only fit three things nicely or that fear of I'm going to run out and have nothing to say. What is your guidance for us when thinking about timing for whatever kind of class that we're teaching?

[00:22:29] Beth: You're right, I get a lot of questions about timing and you're right. It can happen on both ends of the spectrum. From my experience, people don't usually have the problem of not having enough to say, [laughs] especially when they start to engage the groups.

I've been involved with for many years in the instructional skills workshop here in British Columbia, and I know it's in other places as well. We help faculty learn how to teach and they teach 10 minute mini lessons. As soon as they get the memo about engagement, rather than just lecturing at, for the entire 10 minutes, they go, "Whoa, when you create an active learning experience, it actually takes some time to have people go through that experience and participate in the activity."

When you start asking questions or developing and facilitating activities, timing is not usually a problem because people usually get so engaged that you almost run out of time, don't you? Then we go to the other problem. When we have too little time and too much content, that's the more typical question that I get asked, and it's the air quotes of the content that I have to cover.

In whatever length of time that people have for their session, they always have too much because a syllabus is asking them to cover too much in the session. We always have that problem of content that we have to cover.

One of the things I try to do with people is to help-- Outcomes helps identify the outcomes. If you can really nail down the change that you want to have in those learners by the end of whatever time you have with them, then you can get really real in the most important things to do with them during that time.

I'm not going to talk about specific times, but you can't do 10 outcomes worth of things in an hour. We have to get real. Identifying from this for me has always helped because you go, "All right, well, there's no outcome there." That means we have to have activities around it. How long are those activities going to take and how much time do we have and our lesson plans.

That's another tip. If people aren't lesson-planning and trying to chunk out those pieces of the plan into the little lecture-y content burst pieces, but then hopefully, good robust activities around them. It kind of sorts itself out, but it's the people that start with PowerPoint that I think have the most difficulty around timing because they just throw slides in a deck, and then they thought 40 or 60 or 80 slides, and then they can't "get through them" in the time that they have.

If we actually get out of the PowerPoint deck and go into lesson planning, then we're more easily able to solve some of those timing issues because in the design stage, we can say to ourselves, "Well, if I asked that question or if I facilitate them through that activity, it's going to take X amount of time, and I'm just creating rows for each of those sections and it all adds up."

I don't tend to have a lot of problems with timing because of the lesson planning process. I think the more new facilitators or faculty members, if they could try lesson planning, I think they would be able to solve some of those issues for themselves. It helps us get real with how much time you have.

[00:25:56] Bonni: I love what you said about the PowerPoint slide deck. As someone who has done it myself, speaking of failing in public, as someone who's done it, no, no, no. Sometimes you can wake up and get real with yourself before you're actually finding yourself in front of a group of people trying to cram whatever slides.

I mentioned this with regard to, if I'm having technology problems in general, not 100% of the time, but in general, they don't need to know all the trouble that I'm having. Same thing with slides too. One of my tricks that I just love, if you find yourself having fallen into this trap and you have too many slides, you don't need to tell them.

If you've printed out, I like to have always the backup plan. If the technology doesn't work, I have a printout in PowerPoint. In different slide show programs, you can have nine slides per page or something like that, and even print the numbers on there. On your keyboard, you just type in the number 14 enter. I could skip some slides, but not mention it.

It's not going to work in all cases if you're having them join you publicly on the slides. Obviously, if they're there, they're going to see that those other slides are there if you've made your slide deck available to them. Even if you've made it available to them, it's not like you promised you were going to "talk" on all of those slides.

Better to have thought though, with intentionality, like we spoke about in the beginning, what is it that I'm hoping to do here? Are these slides the best way to accomplish that aim? We know that sometimes to convey information, I'm going to have a great image that'll help really solidify it, but then I've got to have something where I see what they thought about it, test their understanding of it, get some sort of a gauge on where they landed with things.

[00:27:51] Beth: You're so right. I think even now with the pandemic, because we're online, I'm using slide decks less and less to, I should say fewer slides in a deck. Sometimes not even a deck at all, because slides are a barrier between us and our participants.

A good slide deck really doesn't have a lot of information in it anyway. I keep questioning myself, looking at the slide deck going, "Do I really need a slide for that? I think I can just post those instructions in the chat because they're going to go in the breakout room and discuss it and they need, let's say it's in zoom and they've got to take it into the breakout room with them."

It doesn't need to be a slide. I'm just asking myself, "Is this slide necessary?" I say a lot of the times, if we all asked ourselves that question, the answer is probably no. I'm trying to remove that barrier between myself and the participants a lot and try not to use slide decks.

That's the same for face to face. Slide decks can also be a barrier absolutely between ourselves and people in the face-to-face part. I think even more so online. Intentionality. Do we really need a slide deck? Do we really need a slide for that thing? I think chances are, the answer is often no.

[00:29:03] Bonni: I got to interview Dan Levy, who wrote a book about *Teaching Effectively on Zoom*, and he has in there to make sure that you have the instructions for whenever you're going to send them into breakout rooms. I just crack up. How many more times do I have to fail? [laughs]

I think you're mentioning, of course, it's in your book as well, but just the importance of, so what is the goal of what I'm about to have them do if it's breakout rooms or think pair share whatever? What is the goal? What are the instructions?

To have those instructions in written form because even if I was in a classroom, you still may not hear me or our minds might have wandered off for just a moment, but especially using web technologies, definitely a challenge with, are you going to hear every single word on something as essential as a set of instruction? I just love

that if we're not going to use slides to present that instruction slides, then absolutely let's put that in the chat so that it's both in writing and as we're sharing it.

I've made that one. I wish I would have learned the first five times I do it, but that's one of the areas where I go, don't try to wing stuff like instructions. As a facilitator, as a teacher, that's an area where I really need to step up and just have that as a commitment, because it makes such a difference in how that experience is going to go for everyone.

[00:30:26] Beth: One thing that I've been doing these days when co-facilitating, especially, this is really useful, is to have a Google Doc that we put up between myself and the co-facilitator of chat posts. We pre-write all the posts that we're going to put in the chat and think through all that ahead of time.

We've got everything from here's how to rename yourself in Zoom, to here's the instructions for the activity, or closing bits or whatever. We have it all prepared and that's just part of the pre-work that we do to prep for the session and it works like a charm. Then my co-facilitator can pop some stuff and we can both draw from it. It's really working.

[00:31:05] Bonni: Before we get to the recommendations segment I wanted to take a moment and thank today's sponsor, and that is the Distance Teaching and Learning Conference, which is taking place August 2nd through the 5th, 2021. I'm excited about this partnership because not only do I get to share about the conference, but I'm also able to attend and bring along a colleague virtually, of course, myself, and we're excited about this super engaging, fun and fully virtual event.

We'll be looking at what's next from the best of the best in distance education. They are emphasizing having us feel renewed and invigorated when we get to connect with world renowned experts, including some that might be familiar to you. Including Maha Bali, creator of Equity Unbound, Siân Bayne, and Jeremy Knox, the authors of *The Manifesto for Teaching Online* and so many more.

By attending, you can earn a badge with their conference certifications in distance education topics, such as fundamentals of online teaching, online education administration, and prepared for teaching online boot camp. Head on over to dtlconference.wisc.edu to learn more. That link should be in the show notes and also within your podcast notes app. Thanks so much to the DT&L Conference for sponsoring today's episode and we're all really looking forward to learning from the experience.

This is the time in the show where we each get to share our recommendations. I have one that I planned on sharing, but you reminded me of another one, Beth, so I have two. The first one that you reminded me of, I've been using for a while the graphic design website, that's called canva.com. It's great for we do it for flyers, we do it for email banners, all kinds of ways that you can use it. You can do social media graphics on it, et cetera. You also can design slide shows within it.

Most of the time, I don't want to use it for that so I'll download it either as a PowerPoint or downloaded it as a PDF or all the different ways I might export it. However, they recently came out with some features that are pretty fun. Some of them are just cute that they have a confetti that if you press C while the thing is presenting, it'll drop down little bits of confetti, super fun.

There's I think if you press O, don't quote me on the keyboard shortcut, but the bubbles will come up from the bottom and just kind of fun. I'm not a huge fan of doing this. We should be careful because there is the idea of cognitive load. If you're doing things graphically that aren't aligned with your intentions, you can actually create more distraction than it's even worth.

We were using that for a fun, what we had hoped to be a fun look at our first year experience. We were bringing together people who didn't already know each other, and we were trying to prep them because we did a trivia game. If you're going to do a trivia game, people might fail so we were trying to be playful and fun.

I think the confetti worked perfectly because we were celebrating the changes that had happened at our institution. It did work well, but I'll tell you the other thing that worked really well is that it now has a timer feature. While the presentation is running, you can just press on your keyboard five as in five minutes and it'll start counting down.

Because I had presenters that I had not all worked with, some of them were student presenters, I didn't want to be militant about time, but at the same time, we had a jam packed session and because there was that game at the end, we couldn't really afford to get five minutes off here, five minutes off there, or we weren't going to have time to pull off that game at the end. It did really work well.

I could see, Beth, it being a little bit distracting potentially in a class if it wasn't done for a reason. Again, it all comes back to anytime you're talking about technology, but if you need it, how great is that? If you wanted to say, "I think pair share, you've got five minutes," or "I want you to write these three things down," or whatever it is, just to have that be more visible, I think is good for everyone.

I finished writing my three things down, I'm feeling impatient, Oh, I only have 30 seconds left to go. Just a good gauge for everyone. Again, I wouldn't say you should use timers in all cases, but I definitely found a use for them and I thought that was a great new feature.

Then I also wanted to recommend a new podcast that is a collaboration between Ed Surge and Open Campus and it's called Bootstraps. I'm reading from their description, their goal is to explore questions through in-depth reporting and compelling audio storytelling. Each episode will tell the story of popular myths and assumptions of education. Along the way, we look at experiments in distributing educational opportunity.

The goal is to introduce listeners to the complexity of the issues through rich characters, struggling to balance their own needs and dreams with those of the broader community. I listened to their first episode. I didn't realize it, Beth. Oh my gosh, I get so behind on my podcast, listening these days.

I apparently listened to it on the first day it came out that pretty much never happens, but apparently, I inadvertently did that because I had known from Jeff Young, who's one of the collaborators on the project and you'll hear his voice if you listen, I had known it was coming so as soon as I saw that, Oh, my gosh, it's out."

Their first episode, they talk about the origins of the expression, lifting oneself up from our bootstraps. It actually, the way that we use it today is not how it originally, it's original meaning. It was really fascinating. I'm so looking forward to what all these journalists come up with in terms of stories around some of the myths around pulling ourselves up from our bootstraps, especially in the context of education I'm so looking forward to.

I keep telling Jeff every time I see some story that has anything to do with this theme, I'm always quick to email it over to him because I know that they're still working on upcoming episodes and I'm just looking forward to the rest of them coming out. I'll pass it over to you now, Beth, for your recommendations.

[00:37:26] Beth: Nice. Thanks. Oh, I love to hear about the podcast and I use Canva almost every day. I really also love it as well. I use it a lot for social media post creation and that kind of thing. I have three books to recommend and to be honest, I'm in the middle of reading two of them because I'm just a book hound and I don't know about you, I like to have a few books open and reading at the same time.

My one I actually have read the whole thing of is *Small Teaching Online* by Flower Darby and James Lange. I did love *Small Teaching* by James Lang, the earlier book that he wrote alone. When I read *Small Teaching Online*, I've been involved here in British Columbia with a community that's in higher ed and it's called Facilitating Women Online or FLOW. We call it for short.

It's the word teaching people about synchronous and asynchronous online facilitation. When I read *Small Teaching Online*, it was one of those books keep looking up to myself and go, "Yes. Yes." I think it's maybe the second section of the

book it's called being human. I'm just looking at it quickly. No it's called teaching humans.

The more we think about what it looks like for us to be a human and bring our facilitator presence to our online work, especially the better. We're thinking about our students or our participants as humans as well. That authenticity humanity piece.

Anyway, *Small Teaching Online*, there's lots of pieces in there. Really, particularly around facilitating asynchronous online courses, but just in general, around being online. Lots of great stuff there.

The other two books that I'm in the middle of halfway through each, the one is, *Think Again*, Adam Grant's new book, *The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know* is the subtitle. One of the stories that just jumped out at me the other day was he gives a story of a black man who has done a lot of work with people from the KKK and through their relationships, he's helped people or people made the decision to leave the KKK shutdown chapters and so on.

Because they've gotten to know each other as real people and realize there's a common human experience perhaps there that they didn't realize before. This man has through his work with these folks from the KKK is, just on all this good work, helping people rethink their original positions on equality and race and all of those things.

Really powerful stories, and just like any Adam Grant book, it's a fairly, I don't want to say easy read, because it's really important topics, but he comes at it in such a way that it's engaging to go through. The last one is, and I feel like I'm a real James Lang fan today, but I'm also in the middle of his book called *Distracted: Why Students Can't Focus and What You Can Do About It*.

I'm really appreciating learning from him around attention and distraction and focus in the classroom, and just lots of good nuggets coming out from that book as well. For both *Think Again* and *Distracted*, I'm looking forward to finishing both and keeping to recommend them both.

[00:40:43] Bonni: Well, you've inspired me because that Adam Grant, I have heard him on so many podcast episodes, but I loved hearing your description of it. I've got to get that on my list. You are in for a continued great experience with James Lang book, it's amazing.

I don't want to end today's episode with, I think, the most important recommendation that I have, and that is that people should pick up your book, *Design to Engage: How to Create and Facilitate a Great Learning Experience for Any Group*. I love how broad it is, in that regardless of context, these are really great techniques to use.

It is also, like Adam Grant's book, a very approachable, practical, tangible. This is not a lot of theory, but it's a lot of just real tried and true practices I know have worked well for you and also in your coaching of others. I don't want to end without definitely recommending that as well.

Just thank you so much for, again, getting in touch with me and getting to have this conversation with you. I really enjoyed it and hope this is just the first time because I think we're not done yet.

[laughter]

[00:41:51] Beth: We always have so much more to talk about, I'm sure, just can go in so many different directions, but thank you for having me. I really appreciate it and I look forward to continuing to listen to your podcasts on all those great topics you bring forward. Thank you.

[music]

[00:42:08] Bonni: Thanks once again to Beth Cougler Blom for joining me on today's episode of *Teaching in Higher Ed*. If you would like to go reference the show notes, they're probably already in your podcast app, but if you would like to visit them again, head on over to teachinginhighered.com/359.

I'd love to have you subscribe, if you haven't already, to the weekly updates. I nearly redesigned them in January and having such a fun time putting together

each week, some notes from the most recent episode, some resources, related episodes, recommendations, quotable words, the occasional tweet.

It's been fun and I've been getting a lot of positive feedback. If you'd like to subscribe, head on over to teachinginhighered.com/subscribe. Thanks so much for listening and I'll see you next time on *Teaching in Higher Ed*.

[music]

[00:43:08] [END OF AUDIO]

The transcript of this episode has been made possible through a financial contribution by the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE). ACUE is on a mission to ensure student success through quality instruction. In partnership with institutions of higher education nationwide, ACUE supports and credentials faculty members in the use of evidence-based teaching practices that drive student engagement, retention, and learning.

Teaching in Higher Ed transcripts are created using a combination of an automated transcription service and human beings. This text likely will not represent the precise, word-for-word conversation that was had. The accuracy of the transcripts will vary. The authoritative record of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcasts is contained in the audio file.