A brief introduction to experiential learning

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A key characteristic of the human mind is that it has a tendency to organize, sequence, differentiate, classify, and to generally explore patterns and connectivity.   LAKOFF AND JOHNSON (1999)

Experiential learning is a *category* of learning, and the quotation above highlights how we humans have a strong tendency to categorize and organize. We like to know where things belong, and why, and so this chapter will do just that; we will explore the basic ideas behind the philosophy and practice of experiential learning.

It is no wonder those sticky, coloured labels posted on walls and whiteboards are so popular with facilitators, trainers and teachers: it is because they can be moved, and so they help us to organize things! Categories of good and bad, safe or dangerous, exciting or dull are simple examples of categories, but they are remarkably hard to define. In a similar way we also categorize learning, such as *adult learning*, *lifelong learning*, *problem-based learning* and *life-wide learning*. We also have categories of learning that involve 'experiential' approaches, and so these too are categorized: they might include, for example, *experiential learning*, *experiential education*, *outdoor learning*, *adventure learning*, *gamification* and *experience-based training and development*. This new fourth-edition is all about these 'experiential' categories of learning that are becoming more widely utilized in many different ways around the globe.

Many of these *experiential* categories of learning overlap, as we will explore in more detail in Chapter 2. They are particularly difficult to clearly define and differentiate. When we explore the defining parameters we begin to engage in what some people call the 'theory': however, even the categories

of *theory* and *practice* are also hard to distinguish. It can be argued that there is no practice without theory, and no theory without practice. Furthermore, most, if not all, practitioners will have their own views on, for example, the question of what is good practice, and their ideas are therefore their own 'theories in use'. In this edition we not only offer practical suggestions and advice, we also explain our underlying reasoning. Much of our thinking behind this book has come about not just by considering what other people have written about in books, but also from our ideas that have evolved from our own experiences, our interactions with other practitioners, and in the conduct of our practice around the globe.

There are many ways people learn from experiences, for example through parents, everyday life, risky adventures, or by going to events. But are all these experiences 'experiential learning' (after all, they are all potential learning *experiences*)? The answer is no, and so we must therefore ask, *what exactly is experiential learning*? Edward Cell, in his book *Learning to Learn from Experience*, refers to a basic definition of experiential learning by Keeton and Tate back in 1978. Cell was highlighting the differences between 'academic learning' and 'experiential learning' when he offered the following definition of experiential learning:

> Learning in which the learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied. It is contrasted with learning in which the learner only reads about, hears about, talks about, or writes about these realities but never comes into contact with them as part of the learning process. (Keeton and Tate, 1978, in Cell, 1984: viii)

This definition is limited in terms of what it really tells us about the nature of experiential learning. It implies that reading and listening are not experiential learning, but of course these 'activities' could be. One practical experiential learning approach described in Chapter 4 is a choreographed experience designed to generate a genuine interest in reading, whereby learners investigate a question by exploring a wide range of interesting material on the topic. Armed with refreshments participants go off and find relaxing spaces to read 'papers', sometimes newspapers and sometimes academic or professional papers. When they return from the solo reading experience they engage in a group conversation, to generate and consider their collective thinking about a particular topic under investigation. It is called Coffee and Papers.

We suggest at this point that experiential approaches to learning consider the role of 'experience' as somehow special, as having a certain quality: the experience is regarded as central to the learning process. The experience takes centre stage, as it were. In experiential learning the *experience* is the foundation *of*, and the stimulus *for*, learning. Experiential learning is not

about a deliberate intention to teach by just telling or presenting: experiential learning is when there is a clear intention to utilize specific experiences for people to learn. The reasoning behind this is that the richest resources for learning originate in the learners themselves. Furthermore the experience can be a powerful memory trigger; a good learning experience is easily recalled, enabling or triggering access to the learning that occurred as a result of the experience. In practical terms this means that we must attend to two particular aspects of *experience*. There is the experience that is designed or utilized *for* learning that requires skill and expertise to design and facilitate. Then there is the experience *of* learning; the processes of learning have to be considered, so we need to know and understand how humans learn, and how people *experience* their own learning.

We are not only of the view that the quality of the experience *of* and *for* learning has to be considered; we also believe we should consider each person as a whole person, as a sensing, thinking, feeling human being. This introduces a second dimension to experiential learning. The learning experience is taking place within our *inner private world*, and there is also the experience we have of the *outer (public) world*, in the environment 'out there'. In experiential learning both of these worlds need to be understood in terms of how they influence human learning. These two worlds continually interact with each other, and we *experience* life rather like our own unique film, with all the clips and storyline put together with information from both these two worlds. These ideas, of four key components (for, of, inner private world, outer public world) to the experience, are our basic start point to both our philosophy and our easy-to-use holistic model of experiential learning, called the Learning Combination Lock, which is presented in Chapter 3. However, at this stage we will build our ideas about experiential learning a little further, step by step.

Figure 1.1 sets out the '2 × 2' elements of experiential learning, of the inner and outer world of the learner, and of the experience *for* and *of* learning. These are central to a definition of experiential learning taken from *The Experiential Learning Toolkit,* which contains 30 practical activities (Beard, 2010):

> A sense-making process involving significant experiences that, to varying degrees, act as the source of learning. These experiences actively immerse and reflectively engage the inner world of the learner, as a whole *being* (including physical-bodily, intellectually, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually) with their intricate 'outer world' of the learning environment (including belonging and acting (conative) in places, spaces, within the social, cultural, and political milieu) to create memorable, rich and effective experiences for and of learning. (adapted from Beard, 2010: 17)

Figure 1.1 The 2×2 experiential learning quadrant

The four core interactional dynamics of experiential learning	
The experience designed *for* learning is experienced in the inner world of the human	The experience designed *for* learning is experienced in the outer world
The experience *of* learning is affected by the inner world of the human	The experience *of* learning is affected by the outer world interactions and conditions

The definition highlights these four core interactional dynamics including the foundational relations between the *process* and the *person*. A closer examination of the definition above also reveals more views on what experiential learning is, and is not: it appears to involve *active immersion*, *reflective engagement* and *significant experiences*. These words represent ideas about the need for the person(s) to be motivated to learn. Another definition, created by Boud, Cohen and Walker (1993: 8), clearly draws on the work of John Dewey to develop these motivational aspects when they comment that:

> We found it to be meaningless to talk about learning in isolation from experience. Experience cannot be bypassed; it is the central consideration of all learning. Learning builds on and flows from experience: no matter what external prompts to learning there might be – teachers, materials, interesting opportunities – learning can only occur if the experience of the learner is engaged, at least at some level. These external influences can act only by transforming the experience of the learner.

When experiences have significance for the learner, there is engagement and therefore potential for change to the person, the 'self'. But this, as these authors say, is a central concern for all learning, and so it is not a core defining issue for experiential learning, despite this idea being found in other definitions. Two other notable contributions that signpost other ideas about experiential learning come from Tom Boydell in the 1970s, and David Kolb in the 1980s. Boydell explores the necessity for

the experience to be engaging, with a sense of *exploration* or *investigation* by the learner:

> Experiential learning… is synonymous with 'meaningful-discovery' learning… which involves the learner in sorting things out for himself [*sic*] by restructuring his perceptions of what is happening. (Boydell, 1976: 19, 20)

> [Experiential learning is] the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience. (Kolb, 1984: 41)

The idea of the transformation of the experience is interesting, and it clearly focuses on processes *of* learning and change. Here David Kolb, who created the experiential learning cycle (see Chapter 2) reinforces the idea that reflecting on the experience can potentially lead to a transformation as a result of the experience(s). Ultimately it is our inner being that is transformed and this we explore further in Chapter 9. This transformation can come about by both positive and negative experiences: it is sometimes a painful process to change our long-held beliefs and habits.
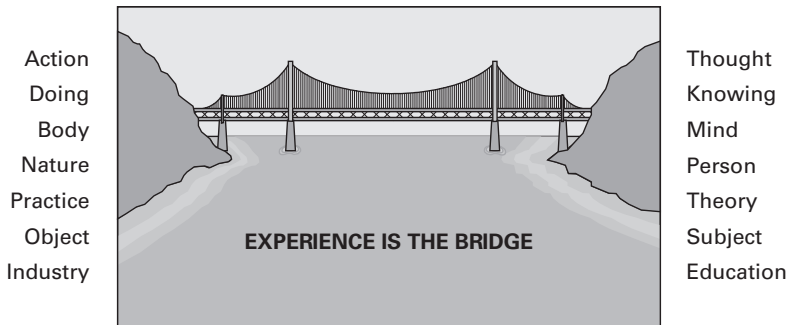
Experience: a bridging concept

The concept of experience is the bridge that connects the person and the object involved in an interaction, and this can be observed in some of the definitions above where there is reflection on the process involving a person and their external environment. Indeed, Cuffaro (1995: 62) emphasized: 'Action and thought are not two discrete aspects of experience. It is not to undertake an activity and then at its end to contemplate the results. What is stressed is that the two must not be separated, for each informs the other.'

Dewey is, arguably, the foremost exponent of the use of experience for learning, and the word experience occurs in a number of titles of his books, including *Experience and Nature* (1925), *Art as Experience* (1934) and *Experience and Education* (1938). Cuffaro (1995) explained that Dewey used experience as a lens through which he could analyse the interactions of people and their environments and it becomes clear that experiencing something is a linking process between action and thought (Figure 1.2). Dewey (1916: 144–45) argued:

Thinking, in other words, is the intentional endeavour to discover specific connections between something which we do and the consequences which result, so that the two become continuous. Their isolation, and consequently their purely arbitrary going together, is cancelled; a unified, developing situation takes place.

Figure 1.2 Experience: a unifying concept

Action	Thought
Doing	Knowing
Body	Mind
Nature	Person
Practice	Theory
Object	Subject
Industry	Education

EXPERIENCE IS THE BRIDGE

Our theories are abstract conceptualizations of how thoughts and external objects relate to one another in a consistent manner. They inform and guide us in our practice, and enable us to gain insights into the various events in which we are involved. If our practical experience does not match our theory of how we think things should be, then we often revise our theories or sometimes revisit the experience in order to see if it can be fitted into our *weltanschauung* – our way of seeing the world. Thus there is a continual interaction of theory and practice in which each informs the other.

In this way Dewey was able to connect opposites or dualities, eg person and nature, subject and object, knowing and doing, mind and body, etc. These polarities become connected and the concept of experience creates an organic whole of continuity, process and situation.

Our ideas about experiential learning are now becoming more substantial. More defining parameters of experiential learning are now emerging:

- *Experience* is central to the learning process, and it takes centre stage.
- The *experience* of learning has potential for the transformation of the 'self', our being.

- The *experiential* dynamic is fourfold: *of* and *for*, affecting the whole person through the *inner* and *outer* world interactions.
- The conditions for learning, learner motivation, active engagement and immersion in the experience are all significant.
- *Experience* acts as the bridge unifying typical dualisms such as action and thought, doing and knowing, body and mind, nature and person, practice and theory.

We would suggest at this introductory stage that the difficulties of completely tying down the defining parameters of experiential learning should be acknowledged, and, to an extent, accommodated. We should be comfortable with the fluidity of the concept of experiential learning, as experience and learning are not static phenomena. Using the metaphor of *fluidity* suggests that experience is like a river, in the sense that it is always on the move and so it is not possible to step into the same water twice. There are times when we allow the waters to flow past us, to enjoy being present in the moment as an experience of just 'being', without any intention to grasp that experience, or indeed to consciously learn from what is happening. The *film* metaphor suggests the experience is a complex composition, but in this metaphor we can use the idea of playback and memory to *reflect in* and *reflect on* the experience and take another look at it: we can rerun, rethink and reinterpret experiences. Metaphors, however, can not only illuminate, they can also distort, so we must be careful which metaphors we choose when communicating with others. We now have more ideas to add to our understanding of experiential learning:

- Learning is a fluid, ever-changing process, derived from and linked to other *experiences*: it is like a *river* or a *film*.
- *Experience* and *learning* are constructed as a complex composite of the inner-world and outer-world experiences.
- The *experience* should ideally be significant and memorable.

At this point we will cease generating more ideas and add a word of caution. Michelson acknowledges the incoherence of experiential learning, suggesting this is fruitful because experiential forms of learning have their roots in alternative practice. Experiential learning, she suggests, is 'liberatory precisely because it is unstable and provisional, because it is collective and not individual, because it always contains an insurgent element that resists categorization and management' (Michelson, 1999: 142). The idea of experiential learning as 'liberating' is an interesting point. This is not

always the case, as experiential learning can also be used to oppress, and this is something that has to be kept in mind and avoided when designing experiential learning activities. Telling people what they should learn, by imposing fixed and uncomplicated truths, without allowing critical thinking, is just one example where oppressive forms of experiential learning can thrive.

More than social and cultural

In this book we take a broad, multidisciplinary approach to the understanding of experiential learning (for a more detailed exploration of multidisciplinary views of experiential learning see Beard, 2015). Many people have explored experiential learning, each viewing it through their different lenses of understanding. However, the majority of books on education and learning are written by authors whose focus is on people, culture and society. They adopt a *sociological* perspective, arguing that learning is socially constructed, and that humans are 'free agents', having control of their actions. This stance rejects the idea of *biological determinism*, a view that our biology directs and determines our actions. Boud, Cohen and Walker (1993), for example, position learning as socially and culturally constructed, arguing that learning is shaped by the socio-emotional context in which it occurs. Likewise Illeris (2009: 401) and Jarvis (2006: 13) argue that learning occurs through social situations, whereby humans interact with other humans in what they refer to as a 'material environment'. Indeed Jarvis (2006: 5) notes that 'existence, then, is never unchanging and always social; we live and move and have our being in a social context'. We do not support this anthropocentric view, rather we take into account both the human world and the human interactional dynamic with the 'more-than-human world'; in this way we recognize other living creatures within the ecosystems of the planet not just as a 'material' backcloth, but very much alive, and as such significant in determining our human way of *being* and *belonging* in the world. We argue that to fully understand experiential learning it has to be viewed though the many lenses of, for example, the psychology of learning, the neuroscience of learning, the biological processes and the influence of planetary processes on learning, in addition to the social and cultural lenses of the human world. We will therefore take into account the fact that we share the planet, our home, our environment, with many millions of other species. Below is a case study to explore how

organizations and individuals interact with this 'more-than-human' living world and in doing so apply experiential learning to influence individual, societal and planetary change.

CASE STUDY   Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden, Hong Kong

Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden (KFBG) is based in the rural New Territories of Hong Kong (www.kfbg.org). The organization is located on the northern slopes of Tai Mo Shan, Hong Kong's highest mountain. It was set up by the Kadoorie brothers who were part of a well-established business family who saw wealth as a sacred trust to benefit mankind. Long ago they helped many thousands of refugees to rebuild their lives. Now it is a unique public–private partnership, funded by the Kadoorie Foundation to the tune of over 130 million Hong Kong dollars per year (US $16.6 million). The organization works closely with the public, governments, academia, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and businesses to protect our common future. As the lead author of this book it has been a privilege for me to provide staff training and development on a regular basis to an organization that has a remarkable set of values within their core mission statement to 'harmonize our relationship with the environment'. Their vision for the future is 'a world in which people live sustainably with respect for each other and nature'.

These are their seven headings of values: sustainable living, justice, love, participation, professionalism, learning and happiness. The details behind the value of 'love' are as follows: having self-awareness and understanding of the interrelationship of all things. Having compassion and respect for life. Recognizing that our outer discord is a reflection of inner discord. Striving for inner silence. The details under the heading of 'learning' are as follows: being adaptive and flexible to changing circumstances. Having a holistic outlook. Being practical, objective, creative and insightful.

KFBG offers a series of public experiential learning events each year that work with the four Hs: head, hands, heart and home. These remarkable events work with experiences involving interactions with the 'more-than-human world' (MTHW) and can be more complex to design. The programme includes, for example, a half-day and a full day such as a 'Day of Mindfulness'; working with sustainable farming methods that use the 24 solar rhythms of the Chinese calendar; a 'Talk to Plants' programme; and many other experiential 'encounters' with the more-than-human world.

Their half-day and day courses of Day of Mindfulness have attracted many hundreds of people in the last few years. The event involves facilitators taking participants through a peaceful and uplifting experience in the serene surroundings of the beautiful forest and gardens of KFBG. The core physical activity is a slow walk, sometimes barefoot, a small pilgrimage as others have done for perhaps 1,000 years, to the summit of Kwun Yum Shan, a spiritual mountain at an altitude of 552 metres. On the way the participants experience mindful walking, sitting silently in nature, storytelling, deep circular breathing, stretching activities, studying individual plants close up from all angles, drawing and sometimes singing and sharing. During the journey they may visit a herb garden and pick a selection of what catches their attention, with which to make a herbal tea half-way up the mountain. Sometimes they have a ceremony to release a wild bird of prey, once injured and then treated and rehabilitated at KFBG's Wild Animal Rescue Centre. At the summit of Kwun Yum Shan they show silent gratitude to nature, or listen to music, watching the sunset.

Many participants remarked that sitting listening to the sounds of flowing water was very special to them. In the instructions sent to participants people are 'requested to respect other participants by maintaining silence throughout the journey'. Participants report experiencing a quieting of the mind, a special closeness to nature, an inner peace and well-being. A significant number of people experiencing these events expressed a desire to return, and to do more of these experiential encounters.

The above case study reveals an organization that works extensively with experiential learning: it is a component within their mission, and vision. The organization takes environmental and planetary issues right to the heart of its purpose, ways of working and ways of being in the world. They also use the experiential learning model presented at the end of Chapter 3 to guide the design of their extensive programme of public events. This case study is the first of many within this new edition that offer practical solutions to support the understanding of experiential learning.

Whilst this book is a detailed practical guide, we continually connect with, clarify and make readily available our underlying philosophy. In addition we will signpost and guide you towards an extensive body of literature so that you can explore and expand knowledge and practice in other directions. We venture into, borrow and learn from many other disciplines: we include ideas and integrating concepts from fields such as psychotherapy,

evolutionary psychology, education, corporate training, organizational development, adventure and outdoor studies, event management and leisure. We consider the role of thinking and feeling in the experience *of* learning, and the role of the body, as well as the phenomenal experiences of the beautiful living world that surrounds us every day. These are some of the many dynamics influencing personal and organizational change: factors that influence how we think, what we do, and how we conduct ourselves and behave in the world.

Experience and the problem of language

When we teach, train, facilitate or coach it is important to be conscious of the words we use in our work. Certain ways of communicating can help the brain to navigate and understand complicated things. In the case study above we might reflect on one traditional concept and way of working that originated as an approach within Outward Bound, notably to 'let the mountains (the experience) speak for themselves'. The natural world has a powerful 'voice', it speaks to us if we listen and let the voice in. The suggestion, then, is that there are times when a facilitator should be silent, not take on the voice of the mountains, but to simply let the mountain speak to people. This leads to the question of whether all people can hear the experience speaking to them, and this might be viewed as the extent to which people can *experience their experiencing*. This in turn relates to our levels of *consciousness of our experiences*, and the extent to which we are conscious of the way we learn from our experiences. These issues are all significant to our understanding of experiential learning.

When we speak, or write, the metaphors we use send specific signals, relating to the way we experience the world: this can be a sensory metaphor, a bodily metaphor or a spatial metaphor, for example. This is illustrated as follows: I am feeling a bit *down*, you have your life *in front of you*, she works in *higher* education, they are *weighed down* with work, the government *rushed* the law through parliament. In this book, as we have already stated, we take the view that the human experience is a complex and fluid process of interaction. These interacting worlds, between and within humans, occur through a system of bodily signals, and spoken and written words. Writing, speaking and gestures are all bodily acts and, furthermore, we continually use these bodily metaphors, as well as time and space metaphors, in our speech.

Language is significant to the way we experience the world, not only from the perspective of social interactions, but also because we have multiple

voices and conversations from our multiple selves speaking almost continually in our heads. You will notice that the act of reading this text takes the form of one such voice within your head!

Our ability to be conscious of or describe our *experience* of the world is limited, and we refer to this as *the problem of languaging experience*. This can be illustrated by the experience of Robert Kull who tried to write about his experience of solitude whilst living on a remote island of Argentinian Patagonia. He was trying to write notes for a PhD when he recalls how his words marched statically across the page, and he dropped his pen, perhaps out of frustration, when he realized that there was no dance between world and word. Here lies a further difficulty underlying the act of writing about and describing experiential learning.

To recap so far, we have the following understanding of experiential learning:

- *Experience* is central to the learning process, and it takes centre stage.
- The *experiential* dynamic is fourfold: *of* and *for*, affecting the whole person in terms of their *inner* and *outer* world experiencing.
- There must be a certain *quality* to the experience so as to *engage* the learner, and be *memorable*.
- The *conditions* for learning, and learner *motivation*, active *engagement* and *immersion* are significant.
- There are many elements that make up the *learning experience*, and they are not only social and cultural; there are emotional, sensorial, cognitive and conative dynamics relating to our human sense of belonging, becoming and being in a human and more-than-human world.
- The richest resources for learning originate within the learner.
- The *experience* of learning has potential for the transformation of the 'self', our being.
- Learning flows, and is derived from other *experiences*: it is continuous, flowing like a *river*, with a script and complex composition, like a *film*.
- *Experience* is a complex composite, made up of information from the constantly interacting inner world and outer worlds.
- Human language, the film *script*, is limited in terms of its ability to describe experience(s).
- Experiential learning acknowledges the issues affecting power and control: learners take responsibility for leading their own learning.

- *Experience* acts as the bridge unifying typical dualisms such as action and thought, doing and knowing, body and mind, nature and person, practice and theory.

More about this book

These deliberations about the nature of experience are not merely academic, with no practical application. It is only by considering what we mean by *experience* that trainers, educators, facilitators and developers of human potential can gain insight into one of the most powerful means to learning that currently exists: learning from experience is one of the most fundamental and natural means of learning available to everyone. This natural form of learning has become increasingly popular whether it operates at the individual, group, organizational or societal levels – and for this reason it deserves close examination. We are attempting to get closer to terms like *experience*, *education* and *learning* so as to create a more coherent, relational understanding, where theory and practice connect to each other. The book is divided into three parts. Part One is an introduction to experiential learning, about the foundations and fundamentals. In Part Two the chapters deal with each of the component parts or dimensions of our model of human experience called the Learning Combination Lock. In Part Three we explore the future and the world of imagination, mental fitness, virtual and augmented reality, and gamification.

Few books other than novels are designed to be read from cover to cover, and this book is based on the pick-and-mix principle. You will have your own particular requirements and should, therefore, dip in and out to select the areas that have most value to yourself. Below we provide a brief description of each of the chapters, to help guide you through the book and to support your personal learning and topic investigations. The book offers techniques that help learners make sense of their experience, as well as methods to develop and practise new behaviours. The techniques include mood setting, drama, creative writing, art, meditation, environmental modification and routine rituals. Much more detailed accounts covering over 30 practical experiences are found in the sister book, *The Experiential Learning Toolkit* (Beard, 2010). We seek to help you as a coach, developer, educator or trainer, to focus on new ideas, and we explore ways to improve professional practice and ethical responsibility through self-monitoring and feedback techniques. Many of the theories and practical methods presented

in this book apply equally to all parties involved; indeed, as practitioners, we too are learners, and good practice emanates from our ability to learn from our own experiences.

An overview of the chapters

Part One

Chapter 2: five big questions about experiential learning

In this chapter we will scrutinize in more detail what we mean by the category *experiential learning.* To do this we examine the roots of experiential learning, its constituent parts, and we will say more about what it is, and what it is not. A number of basic models of learning are provided to illustrate how experiential learning has evolved. We also critique the notion of experiential learning, the learning cycle and learning styles. We compare experiential learning with experiential education and other experiential approaches to learning. Experiential learning, while superficially a relatively simple concept, becomes more complex as we probe the subject more deeply. We investigate the many dimensions of experience, and explore the reason why experience is often considered as a synonym for learning. In this chapter we explore these issues by asking what we are calling the 'Big Questions'.

Chapter 3: designing, delivering and evaluating experiential learning

In this chapter we introduce our overarching whole-person philosophy through an easy-to-use model. We also look at the navigational tools that can support the experience *of* learning with a new idea of *making learning visible*. 'Human experience mapping' is introduced as a design and evaluative method for practitioners.

Part Two

This part of the book has chapters covering each of the six dimensions of the Combination Lock model.

Chapter 4: learning environments – people, spaces and places

The belonging dimension of the learning experience Learning is about interactions with other people. It is a social process, reaching out into

communities and beyond. In this chapter we not only explore the social processes of learning, we explore how we interact with the world beyond human beings, the so-called 'more-than-human' world. Experiential learning occurs in places and spaces, and these can be indoors, or outdoors, and in natural or artificially constructed environments. We have witnessed student nurses being filmed interacting with dementia patients within specially constructed classrooms: simulated homes, with a lounge and kitchen area similar to the real homes that these patients might traditionally live in. In this chapter we show how the design and use of artificial and natural learning environments can maximize learning. Computer simulations, simulated ice-walls, artificial mountains, simulated catering kitchens and law courts, indoor climbing walls, artificial caves, tall ships, school classrooms, ski slopes, concrete white-water rafting courses and many other places are used for experiential learning and many of these will be explored as illustrative case examples. We will show how the rich and varied spatial ecology for learning that is constantly evolving: many different spaces are currently being utilized for experiential learning.

Chapter 5: experiential learning activities

The doing dimension of the learning experience Doing what, and why? Doing less, or doing more? The *doing* of activities *for* learning has been a main focus for some experiential learning providers and we explore how this focus is changing. However, as we saw from our first case study, there is always choice and personal and organizational responsibility attached to the act of *doing* when understood as the way we behave in the world, and how we conduct ourselves.

This chapter guides you through a range of design ideas for particular forms of planned experiential learning. We recognize that much learning occurs in an unplanned way, and that learning outcomes are often not the ones anticipated. The chapter also explores the many different types of activities that people do so that they can learn from their experience. We systematically analyse some of these learning activities to create a 17-point checklist. We also examine stories and journeys, planned and unplanned learning, real versus simulated learning, the use of objects and obstacles, sequencing and pacing, flow, challenge and support.

The main theme of this chapter is that there are many new and emerging trends that signpost the endless possibilities for experiential providers to enhance the delivery of any experience for educational, training or developmental purposes. In this chapter we also consider the way in which the

degree of 'reality' can be altered to benefit learning. Learner perceptions of reality can be applied to many aspects of experiential learning, including the learning process itself, the perceived reality of the activities and the perceived reality of the location in which the experience takes place. We show examples where reality can be manipulated as a key consideration in the design and delivery of experiential learning, including the alteration of elements of realness in a negotiating training programme, as well as the altering of reality in play, drama, sculpture, art and fantasy.

Chapter 6: sensory experience and sensory intelligence

The sensing dimension of the learning experience The senses are the means through which information from the outside and inner bodily world reach our bodies and brains. The senses are the conduits connecting the outer public world with our inner private world, shaping our raw unprocessed experience. This chapter acknowledges that when we use more senses in our experience of learning then the stronger the possibility of learning being more memorable, with increased depth. For this reason, the senses are considered, one by one, with strategies for enhancing and enriching them. The chapter also recognizes that the senses can be overwhelmed by data and we provide advice on the benefits of mindfulness, solitude or silence through sensory input reduction.

The senses can be viewed as providing the basic data, which is profoundly important for learning. In compassionate communication (Rosenberg, 2003), and in other forms of complex communication, learning to observe without emotion-based judgement means developing a strong sense awareness, to get to know our bodies and the feelings we experience. This experiencing our experiences often involves suspending thinking. In this chapter we offer many practical examples where the senses can be used to enhance learning, including sensory work to develop higher mind states, and sensory applications for work with complex learning needs, or for therapeutic work. Sensory data significantly influence the learning experience and there is a need for more research into the way sensory intelligence affects learning.

Chapter 7: experience and emotions

The feeling dimension of the learning experience Emotional experiences and emotional intelligence underpin learning, yet many educators and trainers have only recently given more attention to emotional capability. Emotional intelligence, according to Goleman (1996), is at the core of all success. Emotions are played out in the theatre of the body, and experiential

learning will always have an emotional dynamic as part of the experience. This chapter begins with an examination of how emotions and moods underpin experiential learning. The concept of emotional intelligence is examined and set in context with other types of intelligence. The chapter examines the nature of emotional waves, including the troughs, with balance as a central theme: different waves, different sizes and different frequencies all create the essential roller-coasters that form the emotional self. Emotions influence our sense of self and so we examine the role of emotional blocks to learning such as fear and risk taking. The positive and negative aspects of emotional engineering are also considered. In this chapter the Learning Combination Lock shows how the senses form the basic conduit for an external experience to be translated into an internal stimulation. The stimulation of the senses creates a parallel affective response, one that is a powerful determinant of subsequent learning. Helping people to be conscious of this emotional experience can allow people to manage and intensify their own learning. The chapter offers ways to read and work with key emotional signs and to understand the emotional nature of unfulfilled need within conflict. We suggest methods to access the roots of emotion and ways to surface feelings and challenge emotions, and we further explore how humour, metaphors, trilogies and storytelling can be used to access and influence the emotional connection to learning. Helping learners to sense, surface and express both positive and negative feelings rather than to deny or censor them requires great skill and care in group work. It enables the colour and richness of the feelings of learners to be expressed and considered in a controlled way so as to maximize learners' understanding of the learning processes.

Chapter 8: experience, knowledge and intelligence

The knowing dimension of the learning experience Which is best: thinking slowly or thinking fast, thinking superficially or thinking with depth, thinking too little or thinking too much? How important is the human body in the process of thinking? We address many of these core issues in this chapter. We explore the historical period when the idea of the brain as operating like a computer was the dominant view of human learning, and we consider new developments. Howard Gardner's book *Frames of Mind* (1983) drew attention to the validity and importance of multiple intelligences (MI), eg musical intelligence, linguistic intelligence. This chapter considers the range of intelligences, including the difficult areas of spiritual intelligence, naturalistic intelligence and creative intelligence. Each of the three intelligences – spiritual, naturalistic and creative – is theoretically

discussed and descriptions of skills are listed. As with the rest of the book, there are frequent illustrations of practical examples that link theory and practice, thus applying the essence of experiential learning.

Chapter 9: experience, learning and change

The being dimension of the learning experience It could be said that all learning contributes to the construction of our very being: we learn to become different. Learning is fundamental to the transformation and change to our self, our being. Thinking is a way of learning; sensing and observing are ways of learning; doing and acting are ways of learning; and belonging and interacting are ways of learning. We learn and so contribute to the changes in our being, therefore we are continually becoming, and we do this in a number of ways. If we call ourselves human beings, then what do we mean by being? These are some of the issues we explore in our penultimate chapter. We consider conditioning, conduct and consciousness and the dangers of not knowing our self. We also return to the idea of life as a film, where we write the script, and put the clips of our life experiences together to form our own unique footage. We are always becoming in the life-long and life-wide journey of learning to be. This final part of the Learning Combination Lock model is the most difficult area to explore, but arguably the most important.

Part Three

The final section of the book contains a single closing chapter.

Chapter 10: imagining and experiencing the future of learning

It is not only through considering past and present experiences that we can learn. It is also possible to imagine multiple futures and rehearse alternative scenarios in our minds. This gives us the possibility to minimize the potential for failure and increase the chance of success. Thinking about future possibilities tends to develop the neural connections in the brain and further increase the likelihood of success. We look at how the conscious part of our brains can interfere with the subconscious to undermine our performance, and use the game of tennis as an example. Furthermore, we predict that some of the experiential forms of learning and working might influence the development of the human brain:

To find that point, that reason for our doing and our being, it helps to build on three senses – a sense of continuity, a sense of connection and a sense of direction. Without these senses we can feel disoriented, adrift and rudderless… We shall need all the help we can find to recognize our place and role in it. These senses are the best antidote I know to the feelings of impotence that rapid change induces in us all. (Handy, 1994: 239)

The book is dedicated to making the art and science of experiential learning explicit at the individual, group and institution, and societal levels.