

# From Workplace to Playspace

## Learning and Facilitation Guide



This guide was developed to help you further engage with the concepts described in *From Workplace to Playspace: Innovating, Learning and Changing Through Dynamic Engagement*. Through it you are invited to deepen your individual learning, guide learners in classroom settings, and/or engage your team or workgroup in discovering how you can bring playspace to life in your organization.

Please Note: You will need to read the book first to make the most of this guide.

The facilitator's guide for each chapter includes:

### ***Learning and Development Objectives***

These are a few brief sentences written in the form of competence statements, or learning goals to help facilitators focus their course design, choose complementary exercises, and assess learning and development.

### ***Reflection Questions***

Consider using these to generate small or large-group discussion in the classroom, or in your team. They could also be used as learning journal or essay assignments.

### ***Project and Exercise Ideas***

Some are designed for workplace application, others will be more appropriate for the classroom/training room.

# Chapter 1: Playspace

## Learning and Development Objectives

- To understand the key dimensions of playspace and be able to identify them from your own experiences of innovating, learning and changing.
- To articulate the business case for playspace.
- To understand the mindset shift that from workplace to playspace invites.

## Reflection Questions (After reading this chapter)

- The chapter describes the Protestant Work Ethic. Building on this, reflect on the ways you/our culture has been socialized to devalue play.
- How do you play the roles of leader, facilitator and participant in your daily life?
- How could you make the case for shifting from a workplace to a playspace mindset in your organization? What organizational values does it reinforce? How might it improve your ability to reach your strategic goals?
- What are the dimensions of improvised play and how might they enhance responsiveness and engagement in your organization?
- In what ways are innovating, learning and changing linked through playspace?
- Relational and transformative learning are explained. Can you describe one or two examples of each in your own life? How these types of learning valuable in organizations?

## Project and Exercise Ideas

Interview your learning colleagues or co-workers about their peak experiences of innovating, learning and changing. Find out what happened, what they were feeling, thinking and doing. What were others doing? See if you can discover two or three themes that made this experience stand out.

- Share these themes with your learning group, or work colleagues. What dimensions characterize you at your best?
- Did you hear experiences of increasing awareness, acceptance, and appreciation in action?
- What lessons did you learn that can guide you in more consistently creating playspace for innovating, learning and changing?

## **One-Word Story Game** (See Demonstration Video at <http://www.playspace.biz>)

Participants are asked to stand up and pair off with another participant. The facilitator suggests a first word for the story (for example, “Yesterday”) Each player contributes to the story one word at a time. The participants are encouraged to have fun, and keep the story moving. The stories should make sense, though they can be as outlandish as they like. After a few minutes, the facilitator asks participants to bring their stories to a close. The game is repeated several times with participants suggesting other first words. After a few rounds, pairs are asked to pair (forming groups of four). A final round can be played with the entire group standing in a circle, telling a story one word at a time.

### **Reflection Questions**

In this, and all reflection following the improvisation/experiential exercises described here, the facilitator is encouraged to keep the reflection simple to draw participants’ attention to *what* they are experiencing. If there is a goal, it is increase their awareness, acceptance, and appreciation *in action* as described in Chapter 1). The following questions can help guide this awareness:

- How was that for you?
- What did you notice?
- What were you aware of?
- What were you feeling?
- What were you thinking?
- What did you notice about your level of energy/engagement? Did it change?
- How would you describe the space you and your partner created?
- When did you feel most engaged/successful/supported/comfortable?

After taking some time to surface the “whatness” of participants’ experiences, you can guide them into a discussion of the three dimensions of improvisation capacity described in Chapter 1.

# Chapter 2: Relational Space

## Learning and Development Objectives

- To understand relational space and its value in innovating, learning and changing.
- To generate ideas to enhance relational space in your organization.

## Reflection Questions (After reading this chapter)

- Describe your own relational space—the people, experiences, influences, and personal context to which you relate (consciously or unconsciously) in your daily life.
- In what ways does Threadless/SkinnyCorp bring relational space to life in their organization?
- How does relational space impact efficiency and productivity in organizations?
- What is the connection between relational space and emotional intelligence?
- How does relational space enhance innovating, learning and changing?
- In what ways do you currently foster relational space in your organization, workgroup, and collaborations? For example, what are the literal or metaphorical “pool tables” in your organization?

## Project and Exercise Ideas

- Awareness & Access Brainstorm. In your work or learning group, brainstorm ways you could increase awareness and access to others’ skills, knowledge and talents. What best practices, systems and processes could enhance the relational space in your organization?
- Metaphorical Mapping. Draw a metaphorical map of your organization/learning group/community.
  - Gather teams of five or six around a large sheet of craft paper with crayons and/or colored markers.
  - Ask the group to work in silence (background music can be facilitative) and work together to draw a map reflecting the dynamics and important aspects of their organization, team or community. Images need not be literal, and “bad art” is encouraged.
  - After 10-15 minutes, or when the map seems complete, ask each participant to represent themselves on the map, including their own relational space.

- Draw in any links you see between people, images and processes.
- Once complete, conduct a “gallery tour” through the maps and ask each team to describe their map. Invite others to share what they see in appreciative terms.

### **Improv Exercise:** Appreciation Walk

This exercise is best for teams or groups who have a little experience of each other. (e.g. they've been in class together a few weeks, or are working on a project together).

Ideally, begin with the Be. Here. Now. warm-up (described in Chapter 5 section below). Ask participants to begin walking randomly around the room. You may coach them to draw their attention to their breathing, their left toe, the sensation of the air on their skin, etc. to further heighten their awareness. As they continue their random walking, coach them to notice the space between bodies, the space above their heads, and notice the other participants in the room. After a minute or two, ask participants to come to a stop on the count of 3 and partner with whomever is closest to them.

Ask each member of the pair to appreciate something about the other. It can be anything from hairstyle, to the way they participate in team meetings. The appreciations should last only 60 seconds or so, at which point you can coach the group to walk randomly again, and partner with another person for another round of appreciation. Continue this for at least three cycles. At the conclusion invite everyone to join in a round of applause and then reflect on what they experienced. Notice if the energy in the room shifted, their experience of the relational space (did they become more aware of it?).

This is a great exercise to reconnect a flagging, or stressed group, and bring the relational space to life. It is also a simple example of the dimensions of playspace described in chapter One (awareness, acceptance, and appreciation in action).

# Chapter 3: Generative Space

## Learning and Development Objectives

- To understand the dynamic of generative space and its value in innovating, learning and changing.
- To be able to foster generative space in your daily interactions and collaborations.

## Reflection Questions (After reading this chapter)

- Describe your own experiences of dynamic engagement. What words or phrases do you use to describe how you and your collaborators feel when you are working at your best?
- What are some of the qualities of a “generous generator”? How might you become one?
- What are some of Google’s best practices for creating generative space? How might you translate these into your own organization/learning group?
- How does generative space foster innovating, learning and changing?

## Project and Exercise Ideas

- Map the Energy Hubs.
  - After discussing some of the attributes of “generous generators” invite your team or learning group to name 3-5 people who they consistently feel energized by in the course of their work or collaboration. Place these names on post-it notes on a wall or white board and draw (or connect via yarn and thumb tacks) links to those who participants identify as “generous generators.”  
NOTE: For a larger network analysis, consider using low-cost social networking analysis software such as that available through [keyhubs.com](http://keyhubs.com).
  - Those with the most links are the “energy hubs” in your organization or workgroup.
  - Without passing judgment, reflect on the value of these hubs, how you can create more of them.
- Paper Clip Game:  
Form groups of 3-5 people. Tell them you need to save a flagging manufacturer of an everyday object (paper clip, bobby pin, eraser) and ask them to help you generate as many ideas as possible to support the cause. There is no need for anyone to take notes, just generate as many ideas as possible within a few

minutes. The only hitch is, that before they add to an existing idea, they must enthusiastically accept the prior idea, by shouting “Yes! . . . And we could . . .” You may also coach people to stand up while they are generating, stand on their chairs, meet under the table to continue to provoke new perspectives. After groups have generated ideas for several minutes, ask them to reflect on their experience. How did they feel? What was the energy like in the group? Did they experience the space as generative? If so, what supported the generative space? How might they extend that into their other collaborations?

# Chapter 4: Safe Space

## Learning and Development Objectives

- To understand the importance of safe space in innovating, learning and changing.
- To understand your role in creating safe place in your work or learning group.

## Reflection Questions (After reading this chapter)

- How is safe space linked to the processes of innovating, learning and changing?
- How could you translate Theater Oobleck's four guidelines described in this chapter for application in your organization?
- How do you and your work or learning team experience safe space?
- What are some themes and best practices that could help you cultivate safe space more consistently?

## Project and Exercise Ideas

- Conduct a permission-giving assessment of yourself, work/learning group and/or organization. At each level of the organization ask appropriate variations of the following questions:
  - How do you play the role of permission-giver in your daily interactions?
  - What might you do differently to create more safe space for your colleagues and collaborators?Reflect on the results of your assessment and develop strategies to increase the experience of safe space at each level.
- Group Poem  
Participants are asked to take out a blank sheet of paper and write their initials at the bottom. They then form circles of five or six people and are told they are going to write a group poem. They are instructed to write the first line of the poem on the top of their page, and pass it to the person to their right. The person receiving the paper is to read the line and add a new line to the poem. Before passing the paper again, the participant is asked to fold paper so only the last line written can be seen. The exercise continues with each participant reading the line they receive, adding a new line, folding the paper so as to reveal only the previous line, and passing the paper to their right. The exercise is over when all members receive their original initialed paper. When everyone in the circle has his/her paper they are asked to unfold the poems, first read them silently, and



then aloud to the rest of the circle. The exercise may be repeated, this time with participants passing the paper to their left.

## Chapter 5: Timeful Space

### Learning and Development Objectives

- To understand the value of timeful space in innovating, learning and changing.
- To discover your own practices and strategies to foster timefulness.

### Reflection Questions (After reading this chapter)

- How do inner and outer time converge in the experience of timeful space?
- In what ways did Learning Curve International foster timeful space, and how did it contribute to its bottom line?
- What are the *zeitgebers* in your day or work cycle? How can you shift your relationship to them to create more timeful space?
- How might you, your work or learning group, or organization better *manage yourself in time* to enhance innovating, learning and changing?
- Describe your own experience of the difference between reactive and responsive behavior. How can you ensure more consistent experiences of responsiveness?

### Project and Exercise Ideas

- Extend and Enrich the Time Horizon
  - Identify an upcoming project, learning or creative collaboration session that you have previously conceived of as an event.
  - Translate some of the ideas on pages 150-57, to shift from an event orientation to one of process engagement.
  - Reflect on your experiences with your work or learning group and/or post your best practices on [playspace.com/livingthequestions.com](http://playspace.com/livingthequestions.com)
- Practice Be. Here. Now. Time (See Demonstration Video at <http://www.playspace.biz>)

Individual experience of playspace starts with awareness. This short exercise is a great way to help everyone get back in their bodies and present for the collaboration or learning at hand. Ideally, turn down the lights, without going to complete darkness. Ask everyone to stand up (as they are able) balance their weight over their arches with their knees slightly bend, close their eyes (or keep them at soft focus). Invite everyone to take three long, deep breaths in through their nose, out through their mouth. After the last breath, ask everyone to check out what's going on. Notice their mental state, emotional state, physical state. Remind them they don't need to change what they are experiencing, just notice and accept it, and accept themselves for exactly where they are at this moment. Next you may guide everyone through a series of gentle relaxing stretches. Shoulder shrugs and circles, head rolls (half circles are best), spinal rolls. I often conclude with inviting everyone to jump up and down and shake out anything they want to let go of by throwing it in the middle of the room. This conclusion is a good way to bring the energy up for innovating, learning and changing.

# Chapter 6: Provocative Space

## Learning and Development Objectives

- To understand the dynamics of provocative space and its value in innovating, learning and changing.
- To develop best practices in your own work and learning experience to foster provocative space.

## Reflection Questions (After reading this chapter)

- How do Umpqua’s various practices foster engagement and provocative space?
  - How might you translate these to your own learning/work setting?
- What is the relationship between safety, trust and provocative space?
- How does provocative space support individuality and empowerment? How do individuality and empowerment support provocative space?

## Project and Exercise Ideas

- Provocative Field Trip: Look beyond your organization, or immediate concentration and take a real or virtual field trip to see how others are innovating, learning and changing. If your goal is to deliver unparalleled customer service, discover what other organizations or businesses are doing it well. The further from you business focus the better. Do you sell cars? Take a field trip to the make-up counter to see how they take their prospects for a “test drive.” Want to find the uncontested market space in your industry? Study others who have done it in theirs. Be sure not to limit yourself to business field trips; your most provocative ideas may come from art centers, social service agencies, even the local public school.

- Improv Game: Gift-Giving (See Demonstration Video at <http://www.playspace.biz>)

*This game is a wonderful way to energize your group, and give them a fun way to practice generous and provocative gift-giving.*

Ask participants to form a circle (large groups will want to break up into circles of 12-15 people). Tell them we going to bring the spirit of gift-giving into our collaboration/learning today by giving each other outlandish gifts. Demonstrate by turning to the person next to you and saying, “ \_\_\_\_\_, I heard you \_\_\_\_\_, so I got you a \_\_\_\_\_!” The person accepts the gift with wild enthusiasm, and turns to the person next to her, and spreads the generosity. For example,

Pamela: Frieda, I heard you lost your stapler, so I got you a new motorcycle!”

Frieda: A new motorcycle! I can’t wait to feel the wind on my face!  
(turning to person next to her) Bart, I heard you tried sushi for the first time, so I got you a skate board!

The gift-giving continues around the circle, with increasing enthusiasm. Encourage participants to give gifts that have nothing to do with the “I heard you . . .” clause. It is more fun, and also more provocative. When the gift-giving has completed, ask everyone to give each other a round of applause, and then ask them how it was for them. How did it feel to give and receive their gifts? What did they notice about the level of energy/engagement in the group? How can they extend this spirit of gift-giving into the collaborations and learning?

# Chapter 7: Sustaining Playspace

## Learning and Development Objectives

- To understand key dimensions of sustaining playspace over time and in the daily life of the organization.
- To generate ideas for sustaining playspace that are in alignment with your organization's values, culture and resources.

## Reflection Questions

- How does your organization currently accomplish the “Five R’s” described on pages 198-201? How might you enhance your HR practices to bring them into alignment with playspace?
- What specific insights, practices and ideas stand out to you in this chapter and how might you translate them or use them to generate ideas for sustaining playspace in your own organization?
- Responsibility is a key theme for organizations that sustain playspace; reflect on the ways you and your colleagues are taking responsibility for the playspace in your daily interactions and collaborations.

## Project and Exercise Ideas

- Conduct a Playspace Appreciative Inquiry
  - Once you and your team have a rich understanding of playspace concepts (via reading and discussing the book), conduct an inquiry into your colleagues' experiences of dynamic engagement in your organization:
    - Convene a team of playspace champions
    - Develop an interview guide with appreciative questions in which you inquire about individual's peak experiences of the dimensions and dynamics of playspace.
    - Conduct a series of interviews, or convene a group session in which people pair off and interview each other
  - When you identify your themes, use them to write aspirational statements or shared agreements to guide your workgroup/organization in bringing playspace to life more consistently.
    - For example if you discovered the themes: “judgment-free” and “engagement” your aspirational statement might be: We

- enthusiastically encourage and model the lively, judgment-free exchange of ideas and perspectives.
- Use these aspirational statements as gentle reminders during your recruiting, hiring and orientation process, at the start of collaborations, and as talking points for coaching conversations.

## Chapter 8:

# Epilogue: Living the Questions

In the spirit of dynamic engagement, and the understanding that there is no single prescription or approach that brings playspace to life, generate your own list of questions to seed your continued exploration and commitment to fostering spaces for innovating, learning and changing.



Visit [playspace.biz](http://playspace.biz) and connect with others who are exploring the concepts of playspace, share your questions, best practices and lessons learned.