

Dr. Linley Cornish: meaningful online activities

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Hello, my name is Linley Cornish and I have been a teacher educator for many years.

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So, I understand what it's like for you learning the process now.

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In my time as a teacher educator, the biggest change has been the switch from real bodies in a classroom to students at a distance online.

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Having online students means I have had to adjust my teaching and thinking about how to make it successful for them, meaning I had to go back to the beginning to think about what I thought students needed to have to learn.

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You would know from your course that the current focus in education is on constructivism, on students being able to be active in their learning and construct their own knowledge rather than be able to repeat yours.

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In an online environment, that's slightly more difficult to implement but it's certainly not impossible.

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The personal theory that I like most talks about worlds of learning and the first world is surface-learning and the second world is deep or elaborated learning.

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And in that world, a learner has to actually do something with the information and I think that's a lesson that every teacher should learn.

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It's not enough just to give people information.

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You need to do that, you do need to teach explicitly but you need to provide activities for students to be involved, applying their learning and learning how to elaborate on their knowledge in some way.

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And in an online environment that usually means having a series of activities that the students have to do.

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So, that's one part of it so that the students are actually engaged in their own learning, but the other side of it is because you're not there to see them, you have to work out how to support them in that learning.

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You have to be accessible, you have to be encouraging, but it's not enough just to make those sorts of "hello, it's great to see, how well you are working" type comments.

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You actually need to give specific feedback on the activities that they are doing so that they can learn how they are going and how they are progressing.

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In my experience if you're available and supportive and encouraging that's half the battle, but if you actually give them activities where they have to think about how to apply their learning and then you give specific targeted feedback on that learning, that's most of the battle won in terms of having successful online teaching.

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So, good luck. I hope you have similar positive experiences.