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10 Ways That Social Scaffolding Helps All Of Us Have A Leg Up On Life

Greetings *|FNAME|*,

Sharing stories on my personal journey through life can be a little daunting, especially now that I have the big "C" as a fellow traveler (at least for now). But hearing the words of encouragement I've received privately from so many family members, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances has fortified my resolve. It's also given me the opportunity to think more deeply about social and structural support in their various forms as they show up in life and in learning.

People who face life-threatening medical conditions survive longer with a support structure in place. The [American Cancer Society](#) states that: "Many studies have found that cancer survivors with strong emotional support tend to better adjust to the changes cancer brings, have a more positive outlook, and often report a better quality of life."



Children with someone in their lives who believes in them are less likely to grow into an adult with lifetime emotional, psychological or physical problems. While I served as lead curriculum designer for the Florida Department of Children and Families, I saw the full-scale impacts of so many parents and caregivers for children who were sadly incapable of providing meaningful support for their kids because of trauma, addictions, mental illness, poverty or their own poor parenting models. Children do not often do well if forced to fend for themselves.

The United Way's annual Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) reports on people who live paycheck-to-paycheck and face countless hardships daily. Did you know that the number of ALICE population members in Tallahassee was [49% during 2020](#)? That's a lot of people who are one step from financial disaster... whether it's due to personal health challenges, losing a loved one, losing a job, or some other seminal life challenges. I'm not surprised crime rates are up here, when so many people are desperate just to survive. And this desperation compounds through high stress levels, leading to lower levels of health, often perpetuating over generations due to a lack of necessary social support.



There is some romance to our national character, with the rugged wolf in the frontier, braving the elements alone. But the reality is that wolves who thrive, travel in packs. Although our culture has championed a message of egalitarianism, it has often isolated those who cannot bootstrap their lives to prosperity. Whether it is because of financial, emotional, or psychological disparity, the proliferation of digitally-mediated communities, or a focusing on specific parts of an entire skill set go-it-alone cowboy mentality, the fact still remains that we are far more likely to thrive with the right kind of support from others.



While people can go it alone, the physical, emotional and psychological cost is great – and survival isn't the same as living. A community, too, is only as healthy as its most vulnerable. Therefore, everyone pays a tangible price when neighbors lack the support they need to thrive, despite their own best efforts. Sensible, tailored structure and support are essential.

'Scaffolding' is the term used for support structures in learning theory. There are several ways to provide learner support, such as:

- 1. Models:** Others demonstrating the skill to be learned.
- 2. Cues:** Visual that highlights important items to focus on.
- 3. Priming:** Graphic organizers that visually set expectations.
- 4. Prompting:** Verbal and/or physical prompts that focus attention.
- 5. Hinting:** Hints at periodic points in time where learning specific skills or concepts is more difficult than usual.
- 6. Chunking:** Focusing on specific parts of an entire skill set to prevent mental overload.
- 7. Recall:** Tapping prior, relevant knowledge to enable a connection to new material.
- 8. Example:** Partially-worked examples so the learner isn't jumping from no skill to perfect skill.
- 9. Praise:** Builds self-efficacy during incremental achievement.
- 10. Encouragement:** Helps the learner believe they can indeed learn the specific skills despite challenge or failure, leading to persistence when facing obstacles.

These 10 tactics are essential for a more effective learning outcome, but they also cross-over into regular life. While a person could likely be able to learn a new life skill without assists, the way is far longer, harder, and there is no guarantee that they will be able to perform the new skill correctly without such supports. So no matter what the circumstances, we are in a human condition that needs support.

Although we are all certainly responsible for our own lives and our own learning, at some point in time – sometimes even more frequently – we all need a leg up. It's the kind of support that supplements an individual's will and personal effort, not one that takes them over.

As community members, we have a stake in the success of our neighbors. We need to stand in the gap for others. And those of us who are currently on the receiving end, need to allow others to help them. That's one of the reasons I am so grateful for those of you who have reached out to me and Paul to ease our way on this cancer journey. Please let me know if you have any of your own challenges where I can provide support, because you are not alone either.

Yours Truly,



Sue

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Project Management for eLearning, Part 1: It's Kind Of Like Herding Cats



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Considered to be the Project Manager's bible, the PMBOK Guide says that projects are "a temporary endeavor to produce a unique project, service, or result." Another definition of a project is a problem that needs a solution.

Project Managers, or PMs for short, are the leaders on the team who lead the charge for that solution. But unofficially... project management is pretty much like herding cats.

Because in the age of Covid, internal teams - and clients - live and work all over the United States. And throughout the world. With so many different things to factor in, things can get a little bit tricky. Therefore, this article provides a brief overview of how to herd 'em like a pro, and avoid getting scratched.

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