Education provides an opportunity to look beyond the circle that is our life. It provides exposure to new ideas and information, the challenge of differing perspectives, and the resulting disorienting dilemmas that transform adults and encourage their growth and development. I believe the main purpose of adult education is to promote and encourage adult growth and development. I choose the word encourage purposefully. What we can and must do as educators is to give courage. Encouragement allows for support, it allows for guidance. It allows for students to empower themselves and to be empowered. Encouragement is gentle, not wrenching. Teaching and learning take time and must be allowed to take the pace of each individual. This is a difficult task to accomplish in a world of boundaries, of sixteen week semesters and syllabi of material to cover.

How then do we teach encouragingly? We teach as equals. We teach with respect for each human spirit, each point of view, perspective and level of understanding. We teach informatively, and experientially, allowing our students to fully explore the material and allowing ourselves to fully inform the material with the input of our students. We do this through the use of multiple forms of expression; reading, journaling, discussion, writing, debates, team projects, reflective listening, reflective thinking, internship and practicum experiences, problem solving, team and organizational learning and lectures.

At the core of my teaching philosophy is the growth and development of each individual. The foundation is built upon mutual respect and the honest dialogue that such respect implies. The structure is formed of the best practices of adult learning: self direction, encouraged with guidance; experiential learning, encouraged with opportunities to explore; team and organizational learning, encouraged with a supportive atmosphere in which that learning may be transferred; and transformational learning, encouraged with the challenge and support that allows real growth and change to occur. The measure of an effective educational experience is not simply what has been learned, but how that learning has been integrated and how it has transformed the individual.