



PLAYFUL PEDAGOGY

**HARNESSING THE
POWER OF PLAY**

Lisa K. Forbes, PhD, LPC, RPT-S / University of Colorado Denver / Professors at Play



Ethics in Higher Education

- Inquiry
- Growth
- Curiosity
- Human Development
- Opportunity
- DEI
- Justice
- Community

**EMERGENT
PEDAGOGY**

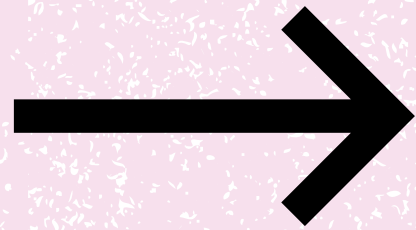
Implicit Rules in Higher Education

- Command & control
- Conformity
- Hierarchy
- Fear
- Status quo
- Winners & losers
- Busy work
- Compliance
- Authority

**TRADITIONAL
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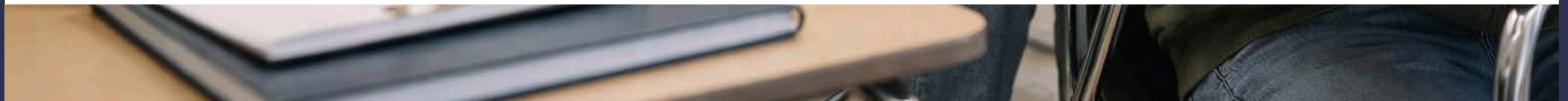
Spirit of Play in Higher Education

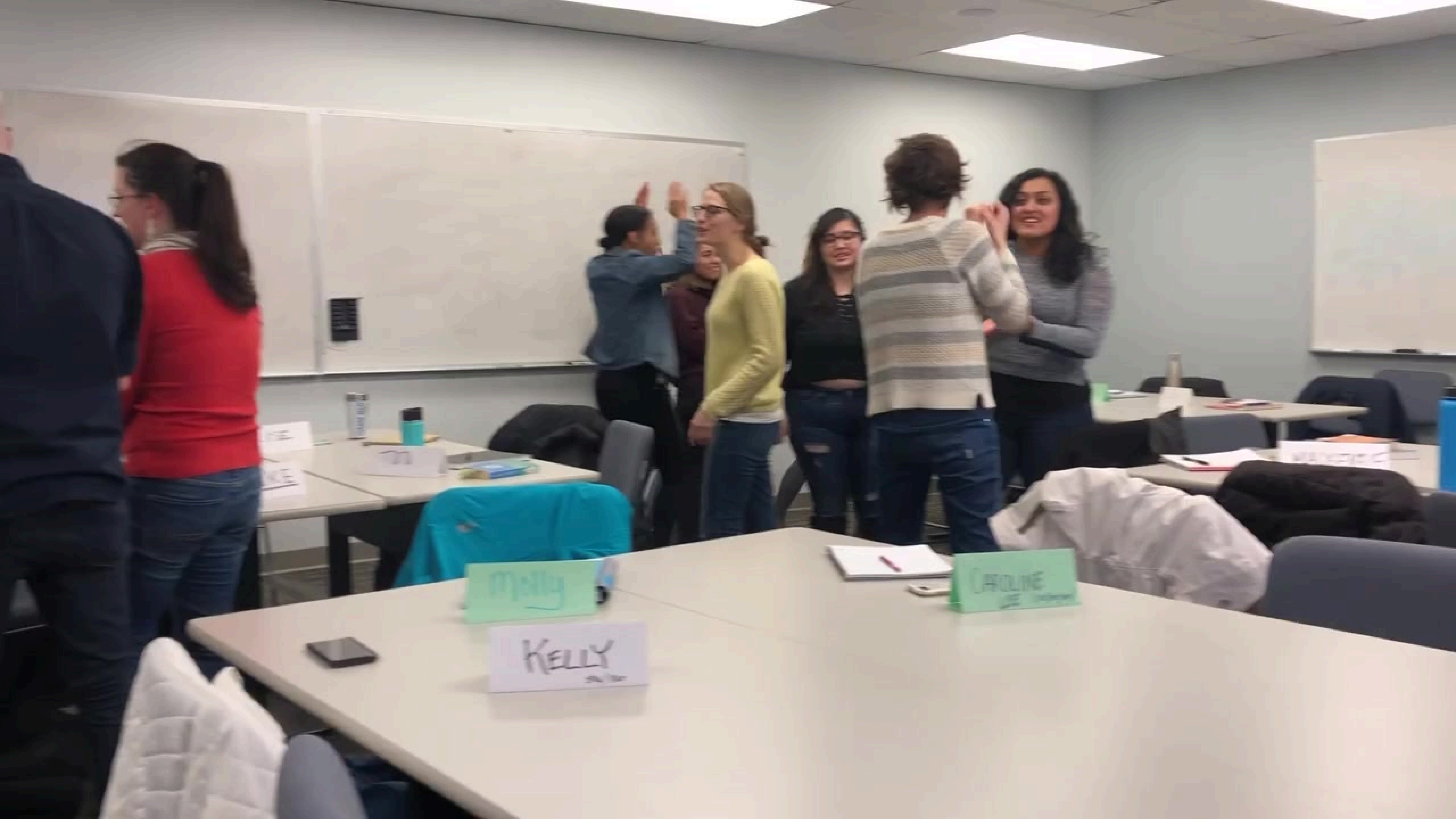
- Joy
- Freedom
- Meaning making
- Engagement
- Vulnerability
- Risk-taking
- Trust
- Belonging
- Achievement
- Discovery

**PLAYFUL
PEDAGOGY**



What happens when we take developmental science seriously and bring play into our adult classrooms?

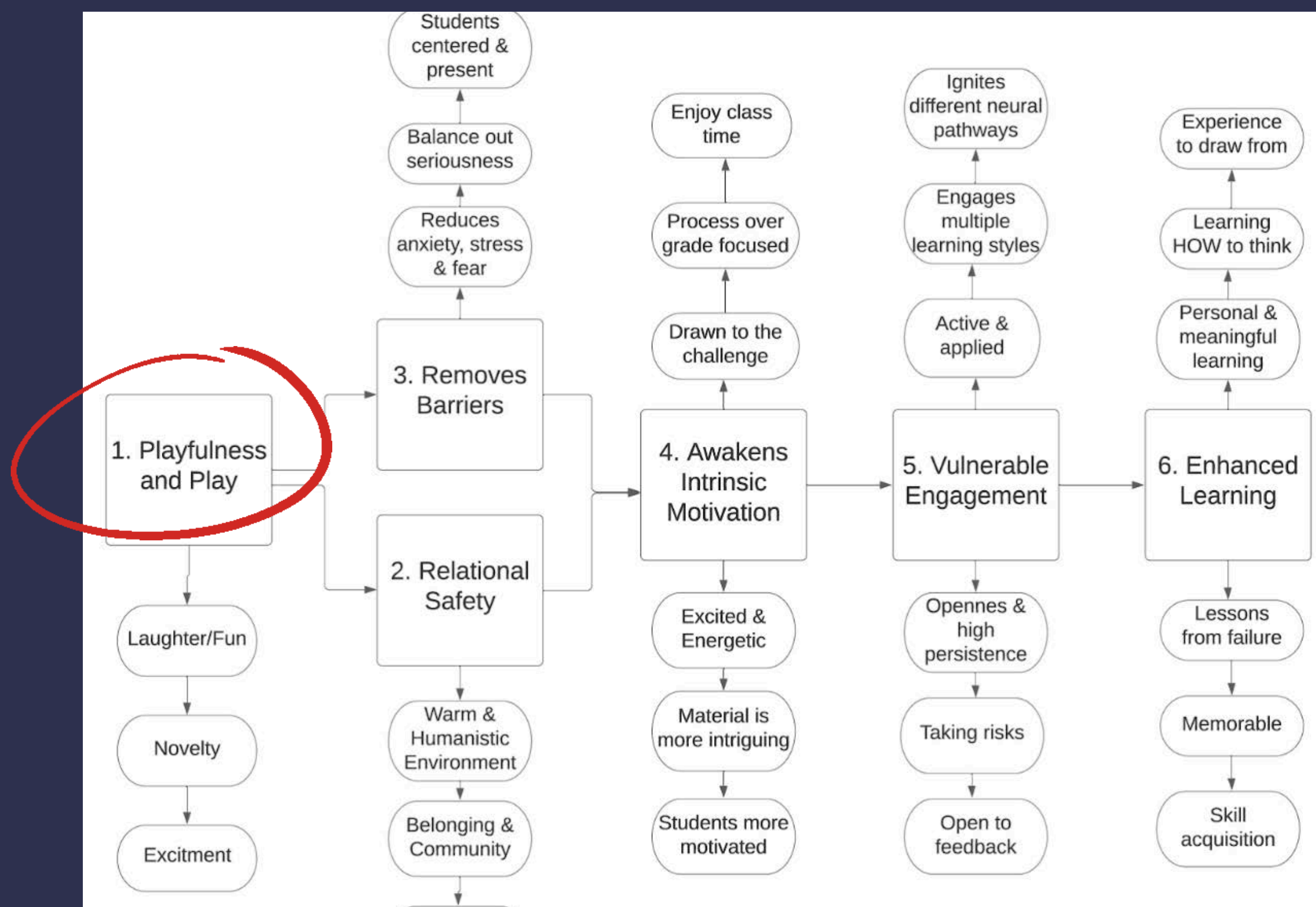




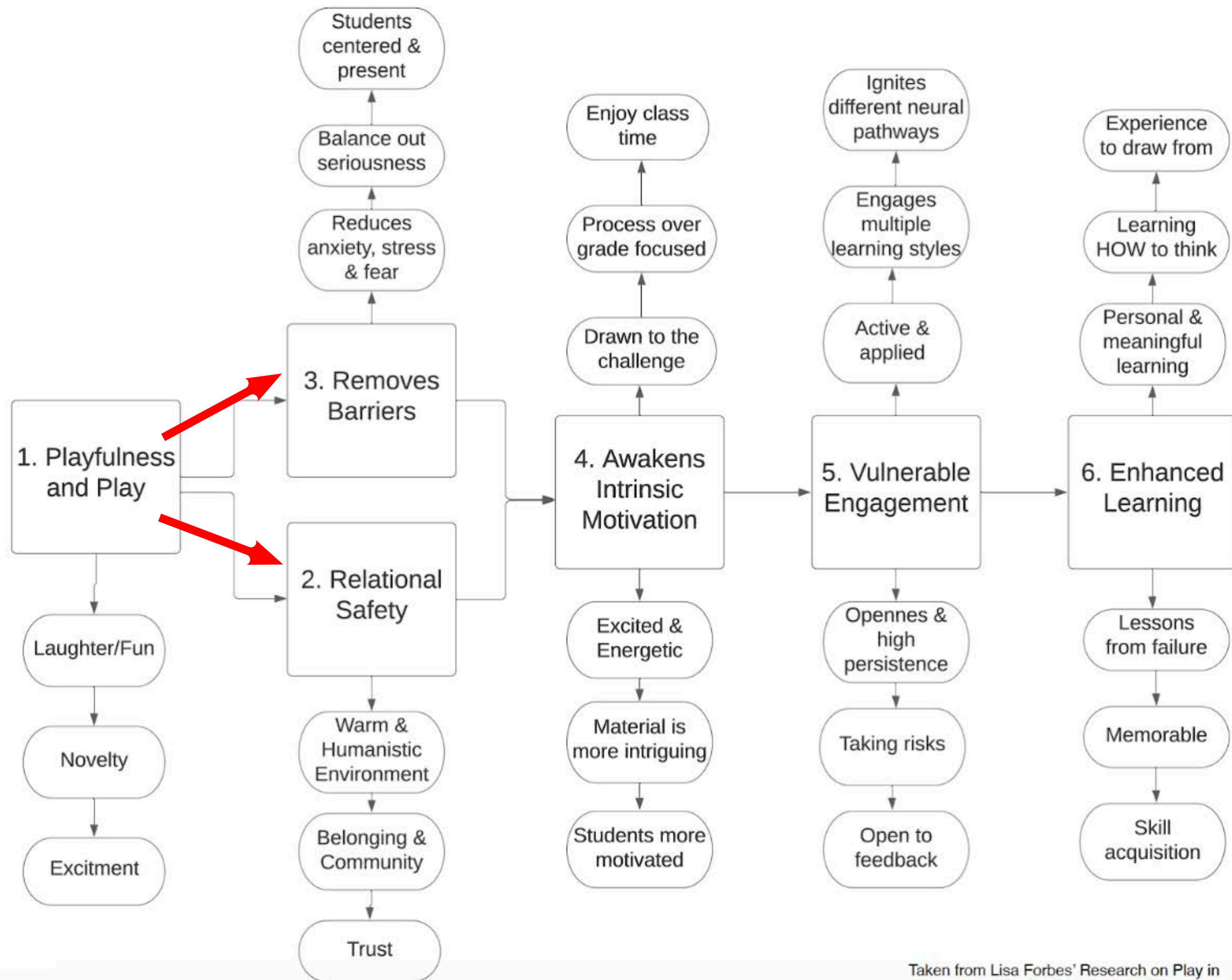
Molly

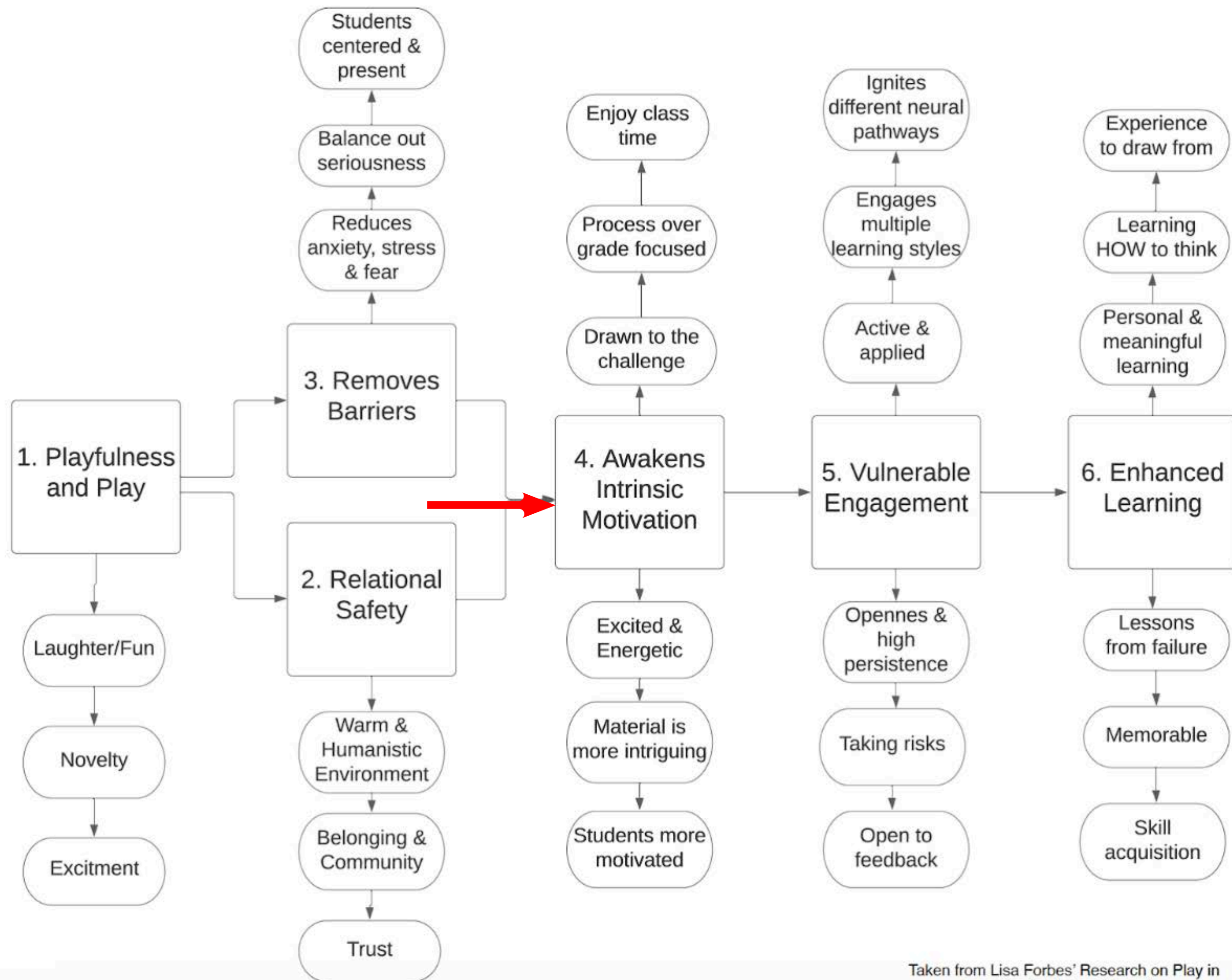
Kelly

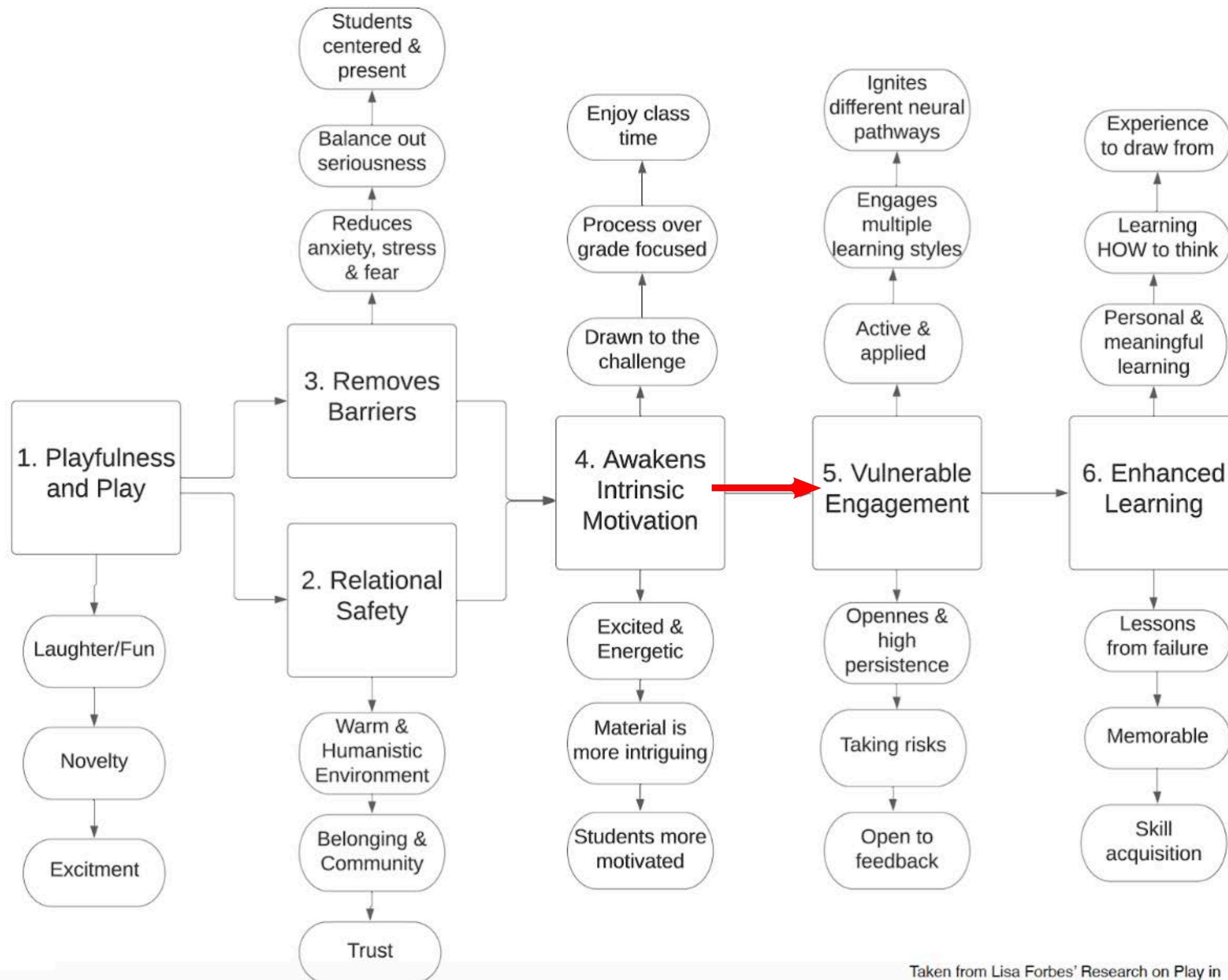
CAROLINE

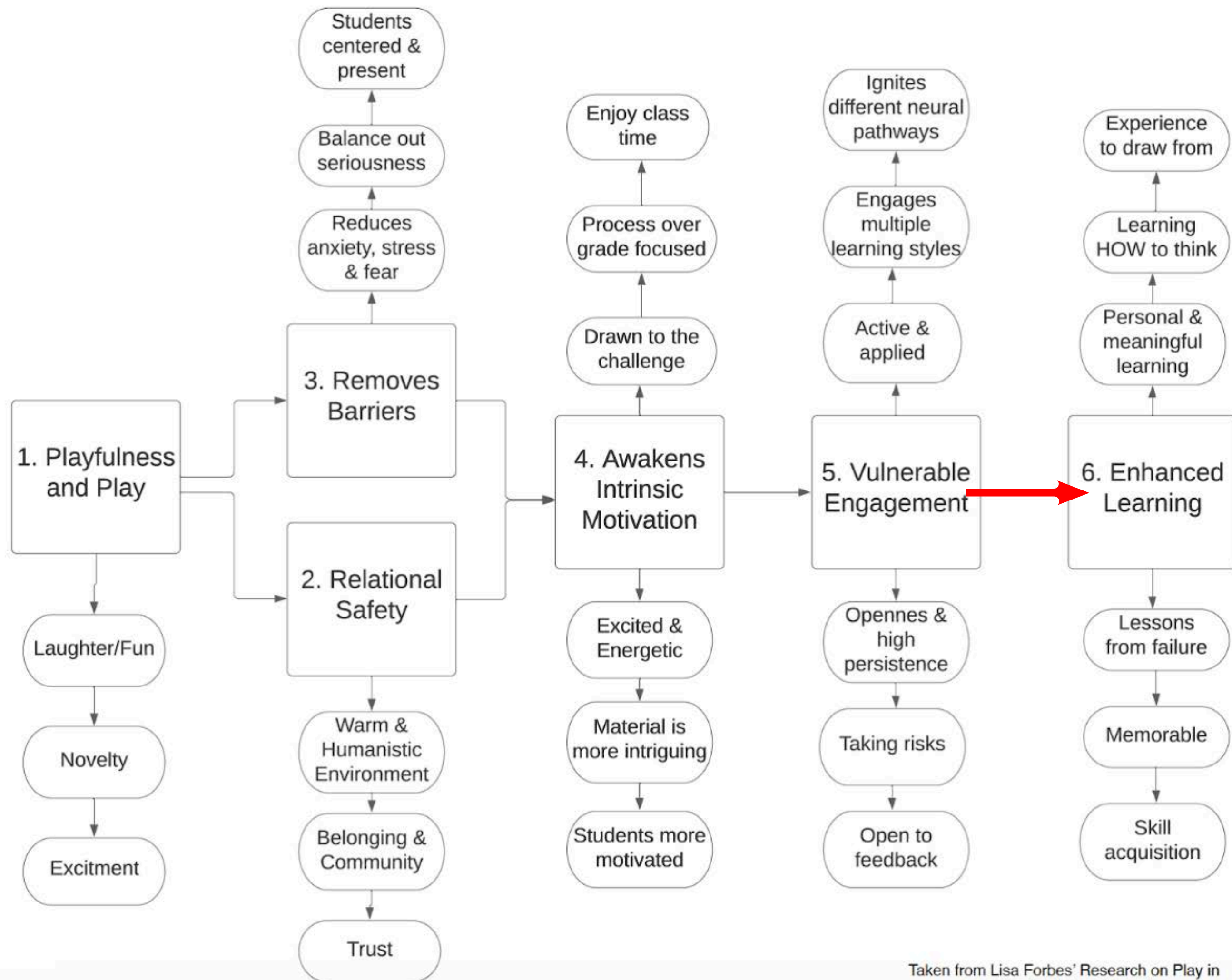


Forbes, L.K. (2021). The process of playful learning in higher education: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 15(1), 57-73.

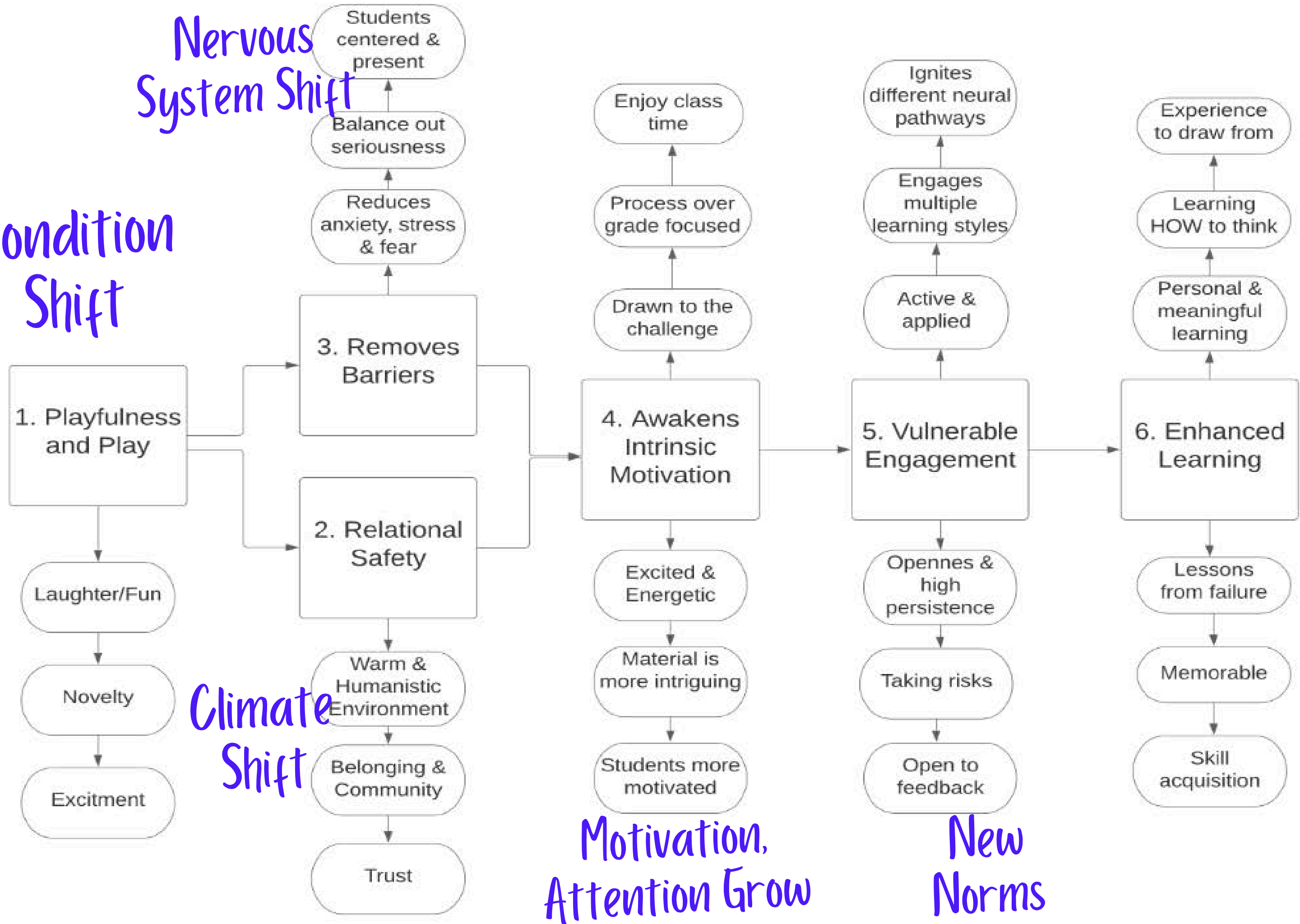








Condition Shift



Conditions



Emotions

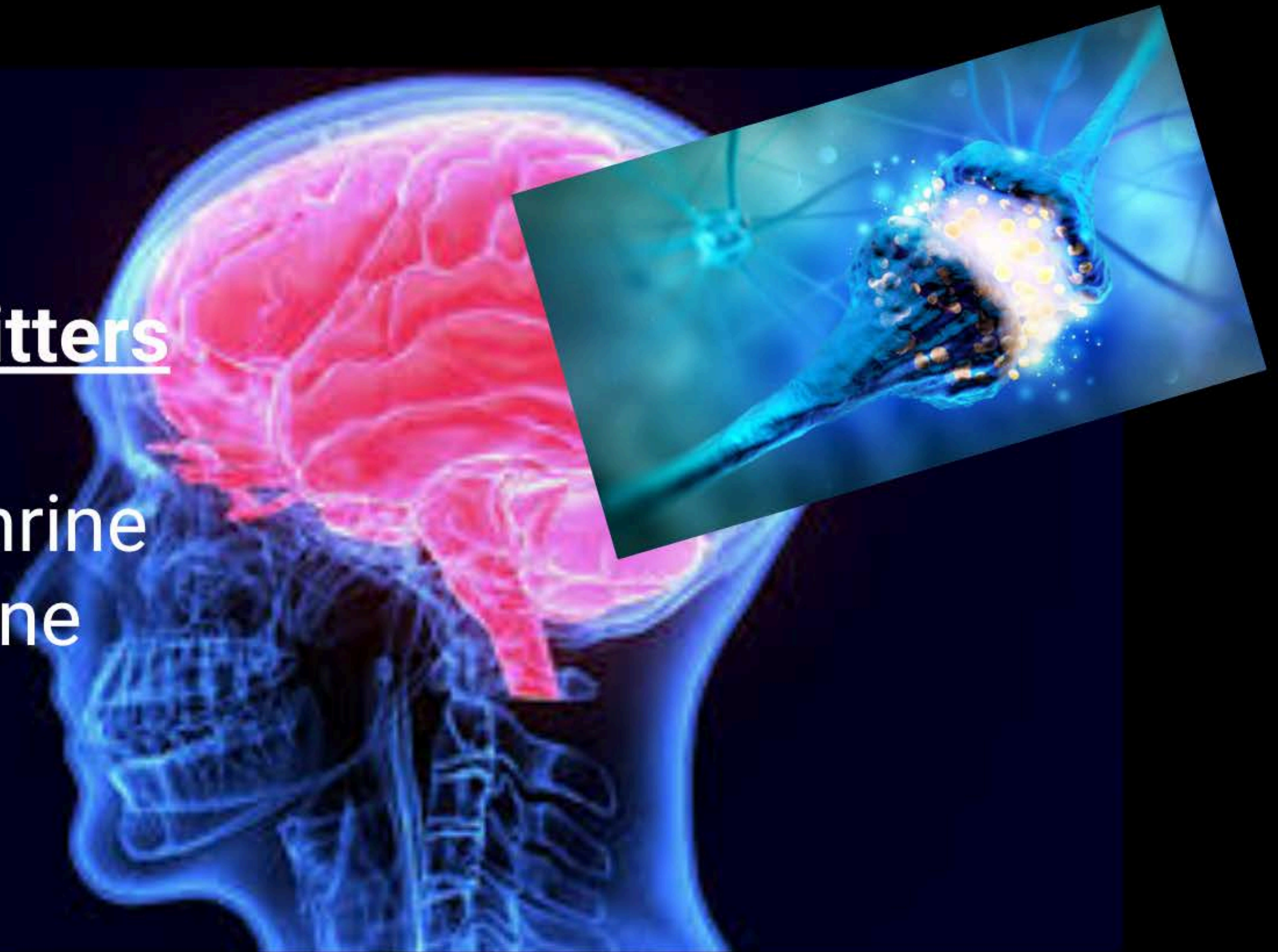
- Novelty
- Social connection
- Relevance
- Fun
- Play
- Engagement
- Humor
- Safety
- Variety
- Enjoyable activities



- Surprise
- Joy
- Alertness
- Motivation
- Curiosity
- Creativity
- Relaxation
- Excitement
- Focus/attention
- Effort
- Trust

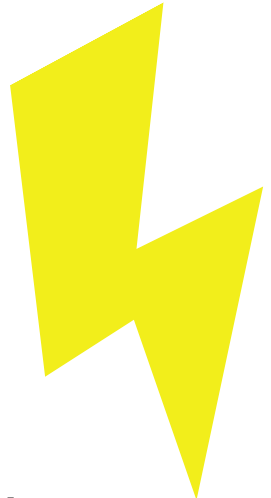
Neurotransmitters

- Dopamine
- Norepinephrine
- Acetylcholine
- Oxytocin





THE POWER OF PLAY

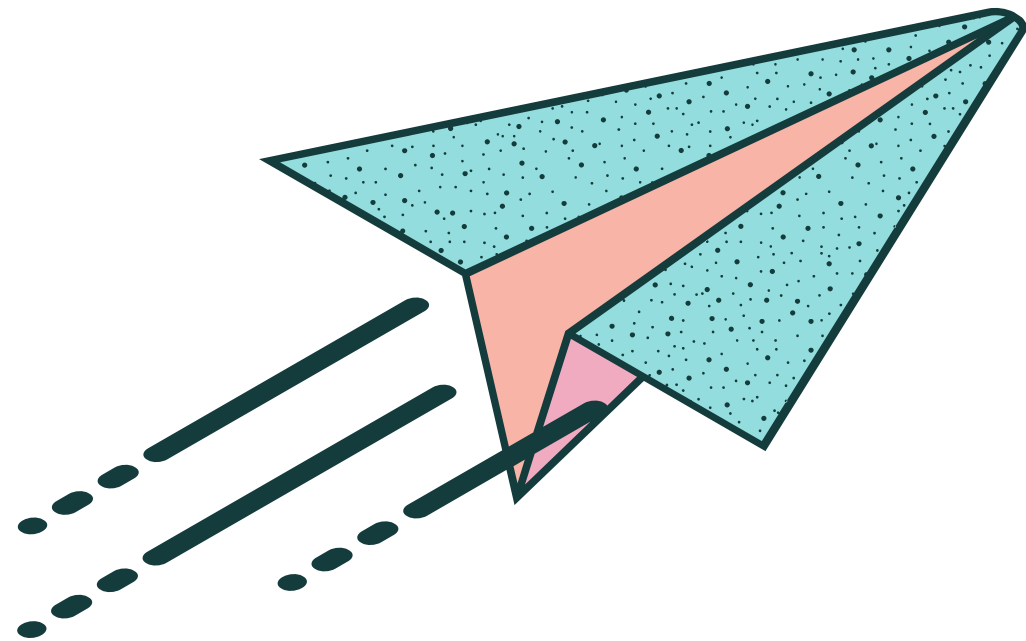


- Increasing attention and engagement
 - Strengthening memory and retention
 - Expanding creativity and flexible thinking
 - Reducing fear of failure and learning anxiety
 - Creating psychological safety for participation
 - Building connection and collaboration
 - Encouraging experimentation and risk taking
 - Making learning meaningful and memorable
- 
- 



**Play is a key that unlocks a
hidden power in learning.**

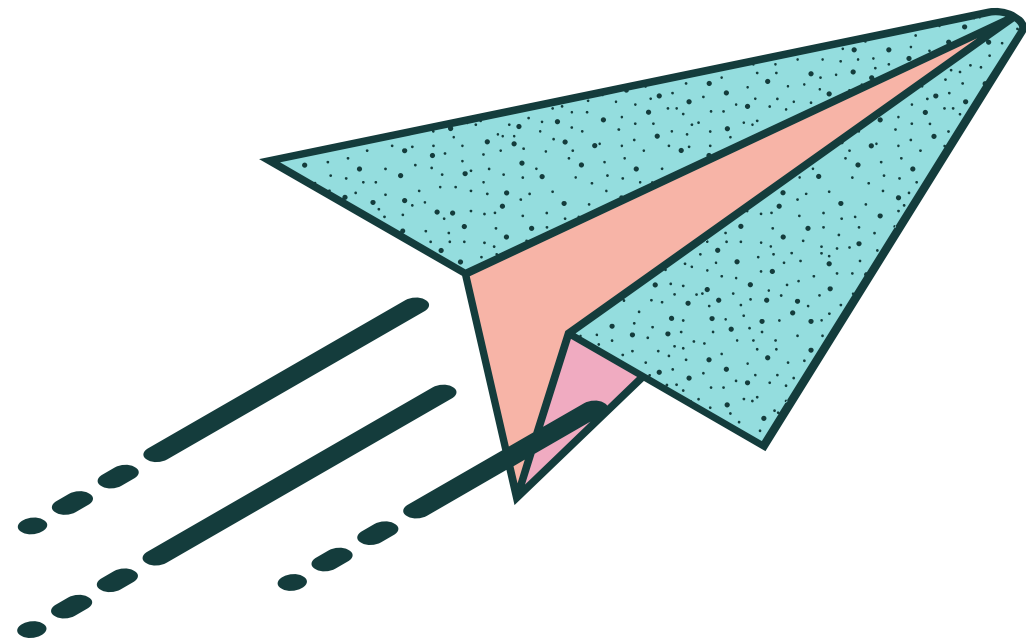
PLAYFUL PEDAGOGY



AN ACTIVITY

Harnessing the power
of play in learning.

PLAYFUL PEDAGOGY



AN ACTIVITY

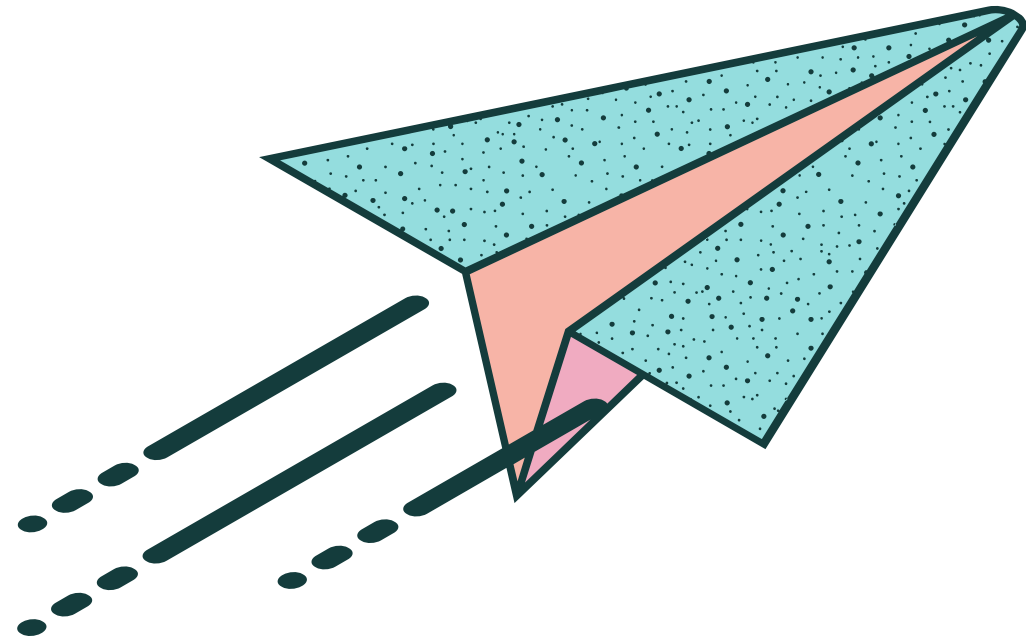
Harnessing the power of play in learning.



A WAY OF BEING

Not taking ourselves too seriously.

PLAYFUL PEDAGOGY



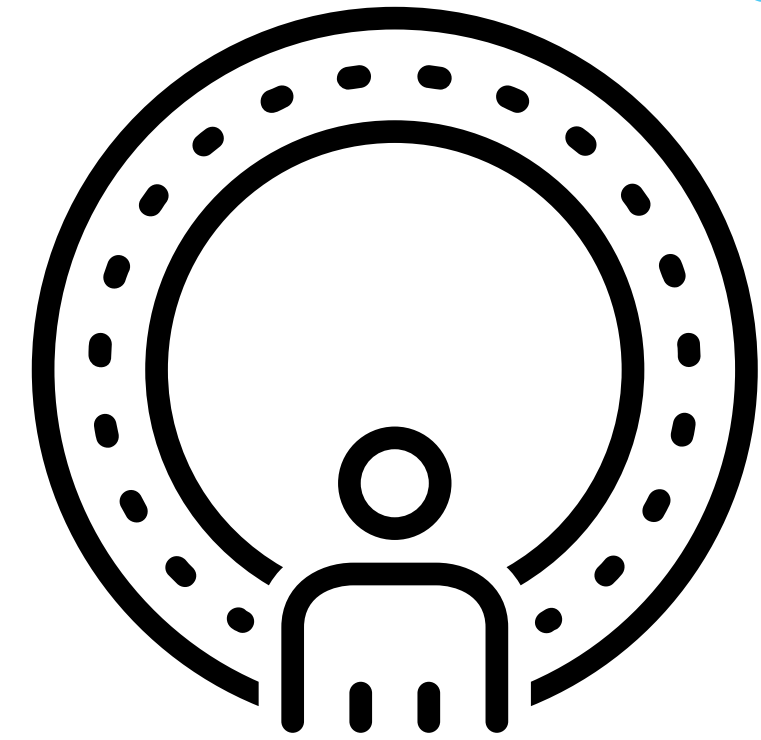
AN ACTIVITY

Harnessing the power of play in learning.



A WAY OF BEING

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A PHILOSOPHY

Playing with the status quo, break then re-make.

Finding novel, creative, & playful ways to get students to actually THINK about what they're learning rather than be passive recipients of that learning.

PYRAMID OF

PLAY

Whole
Course Design

Play to
Teach Content

Connection-Former
Activities

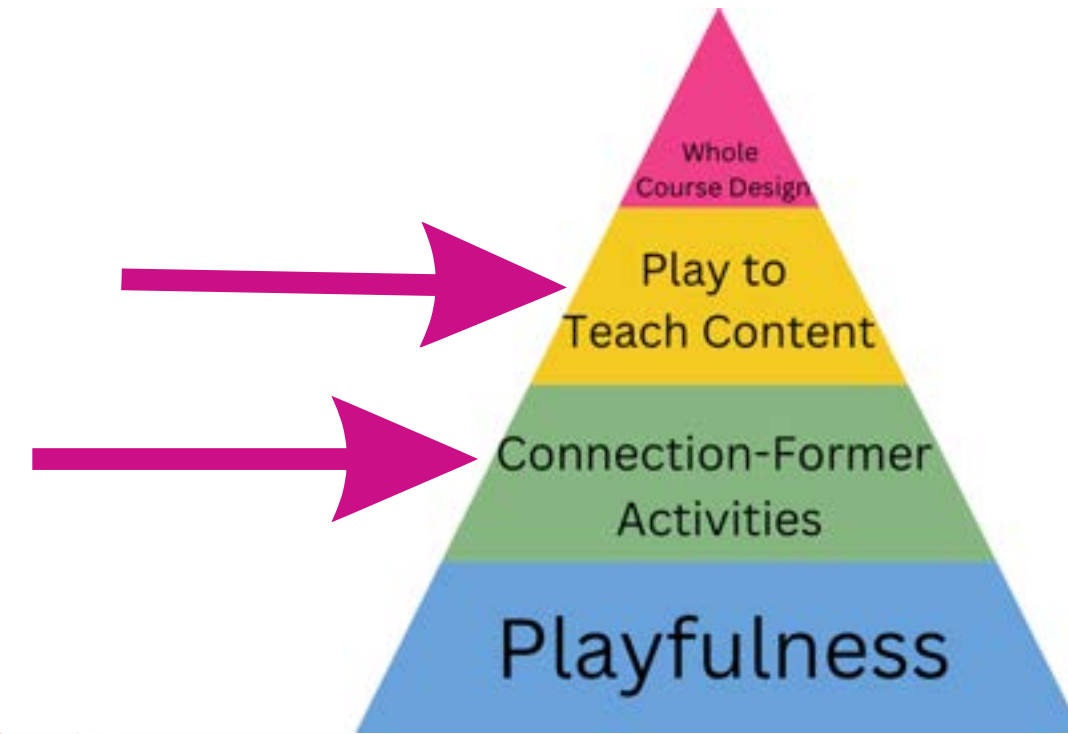
Playfulness



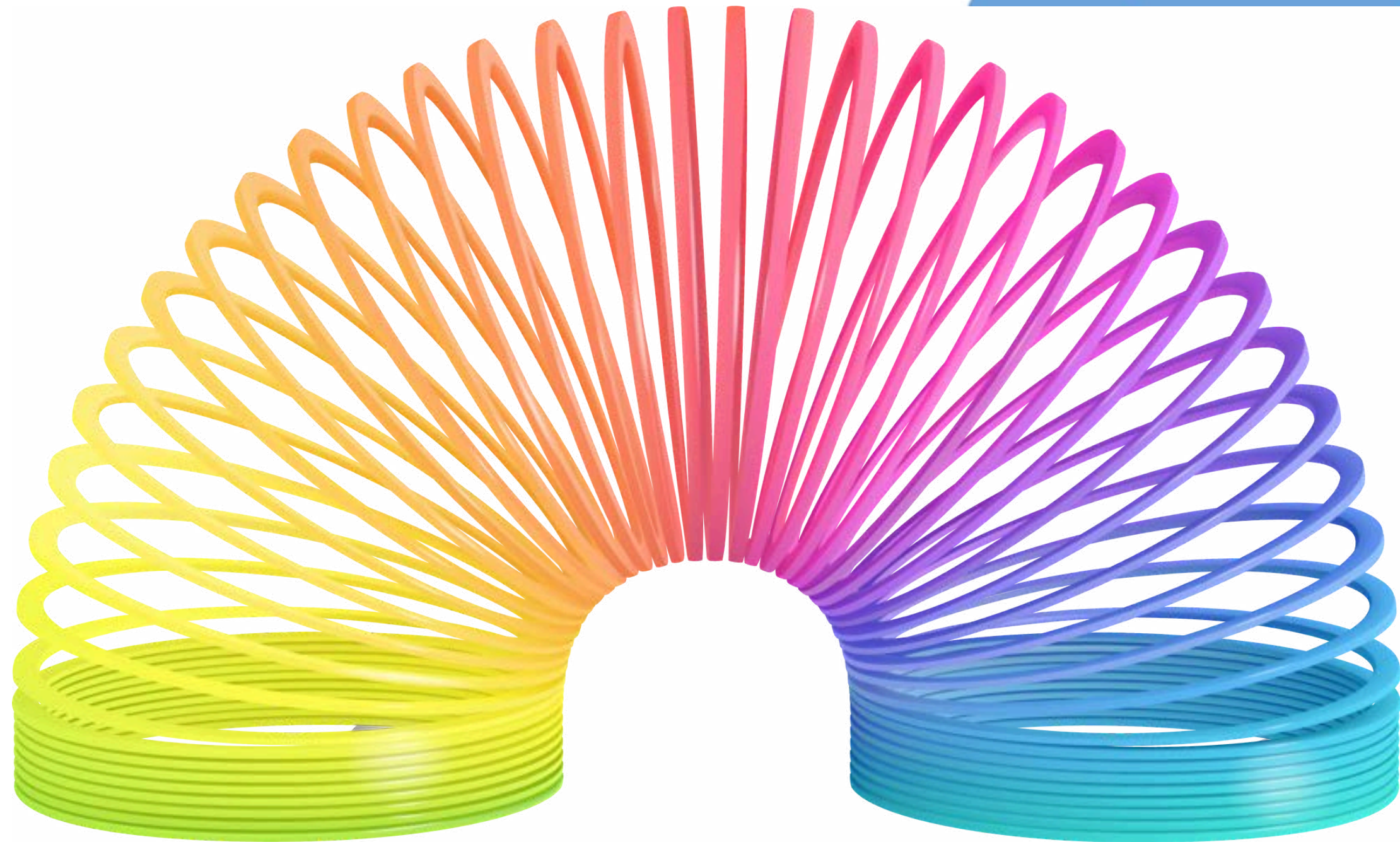
So, on a 1 to 9 on rubberduck scale, how are things today?



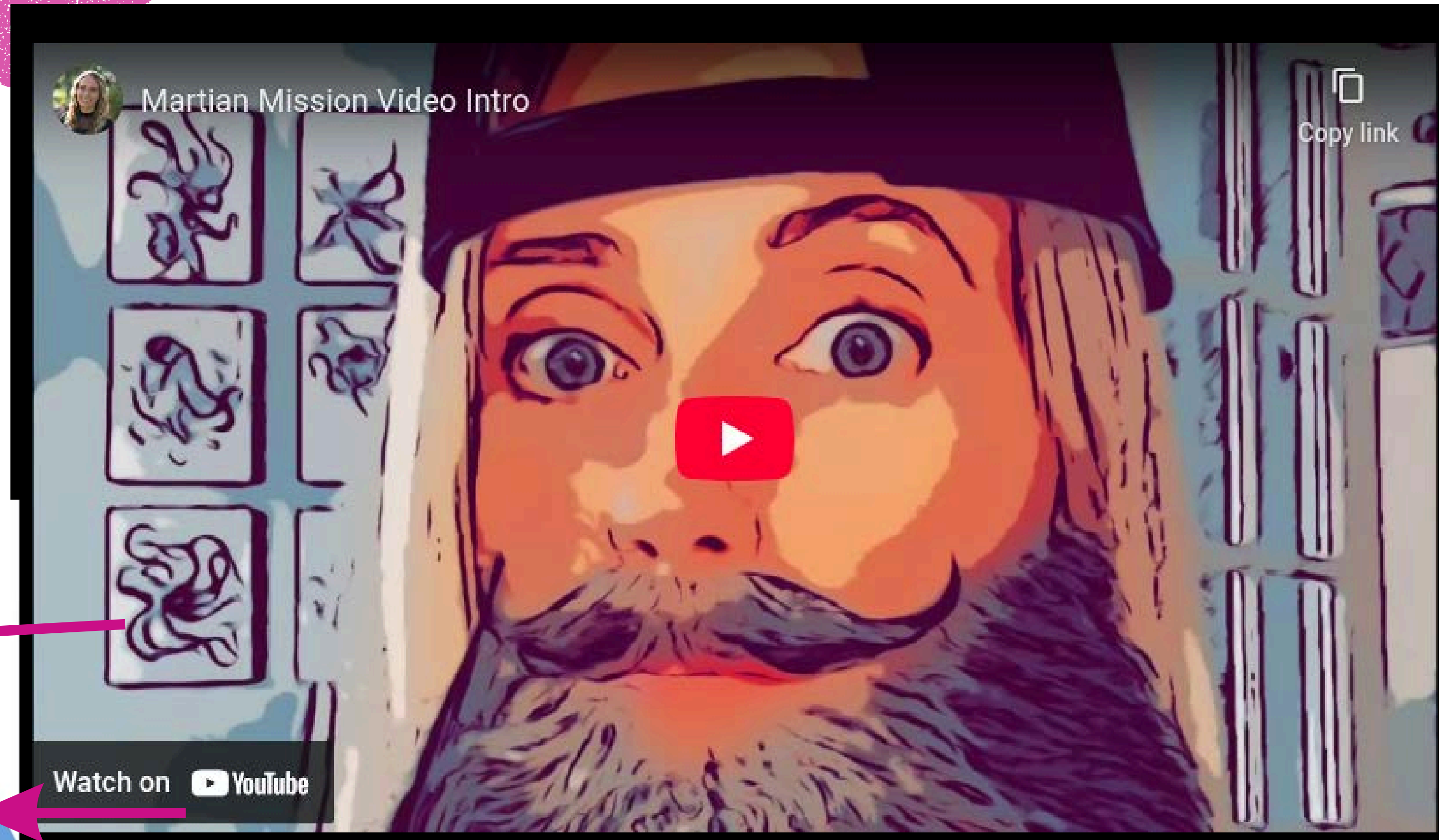
ITEMS & METAPHORS



- Find an item in your bag that best describes you.
- As a group, describe how each item relates to _____ (topic of the class).
 - Ex: Empathy.



Novel Discussions

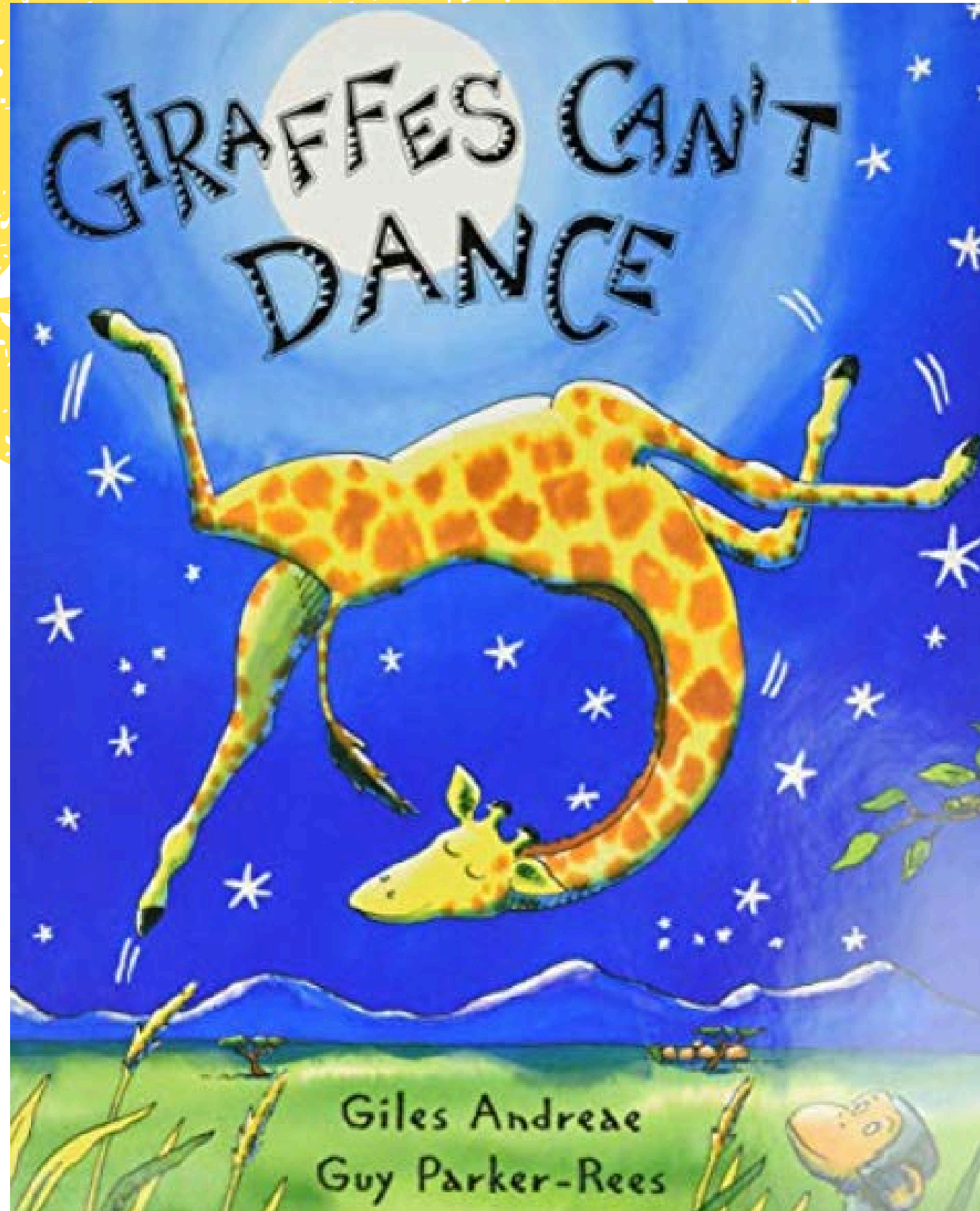


DYI DISCUSSIONS



- What do you want to process from the role play?
- What question would you like to hear your peers talk about, even if you don't want to say it out loud?

CHILDREN'S BOOK CASE STUDY

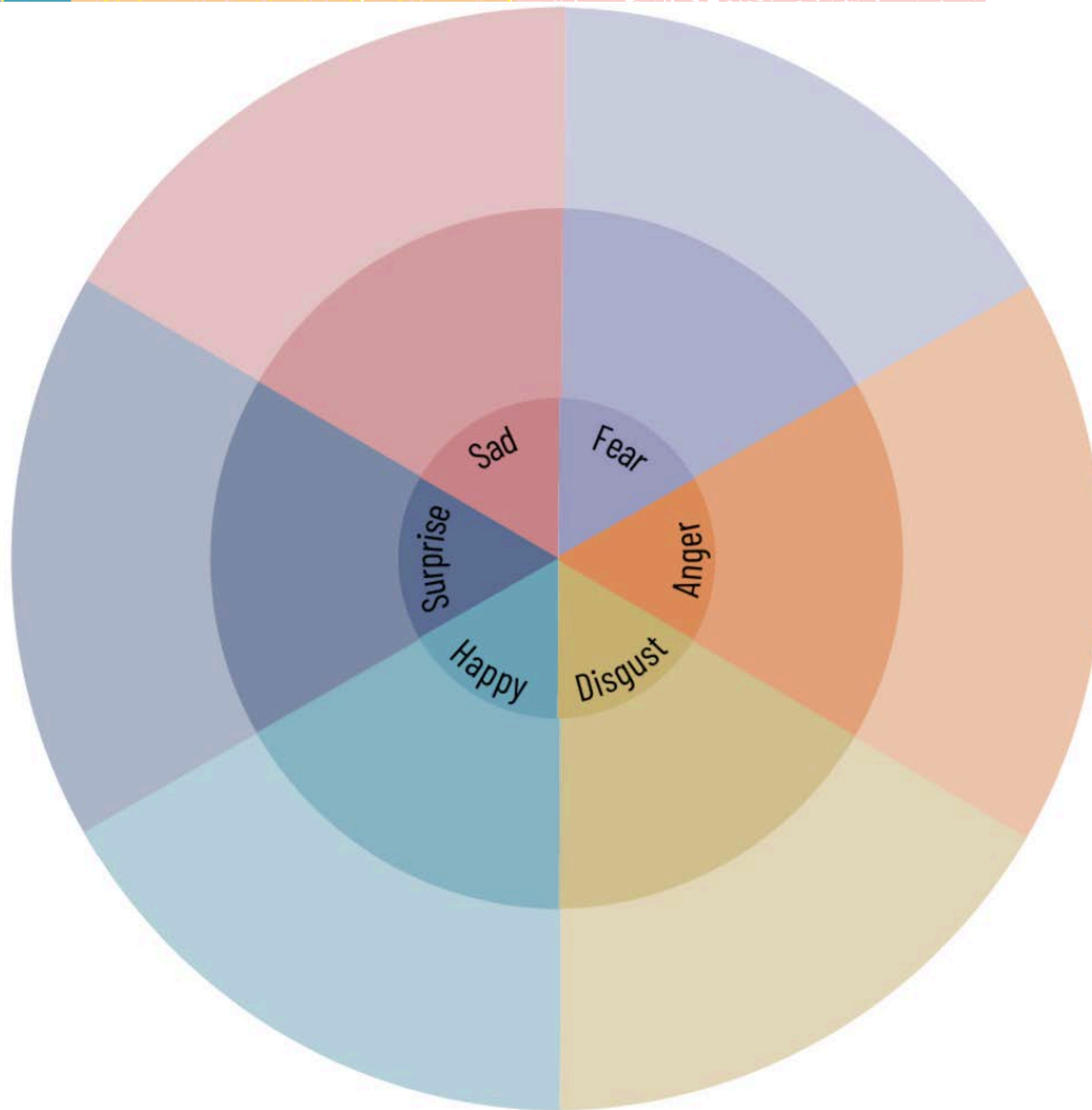


Create a more playful case study to conceptualize, apply theory, tx plan.

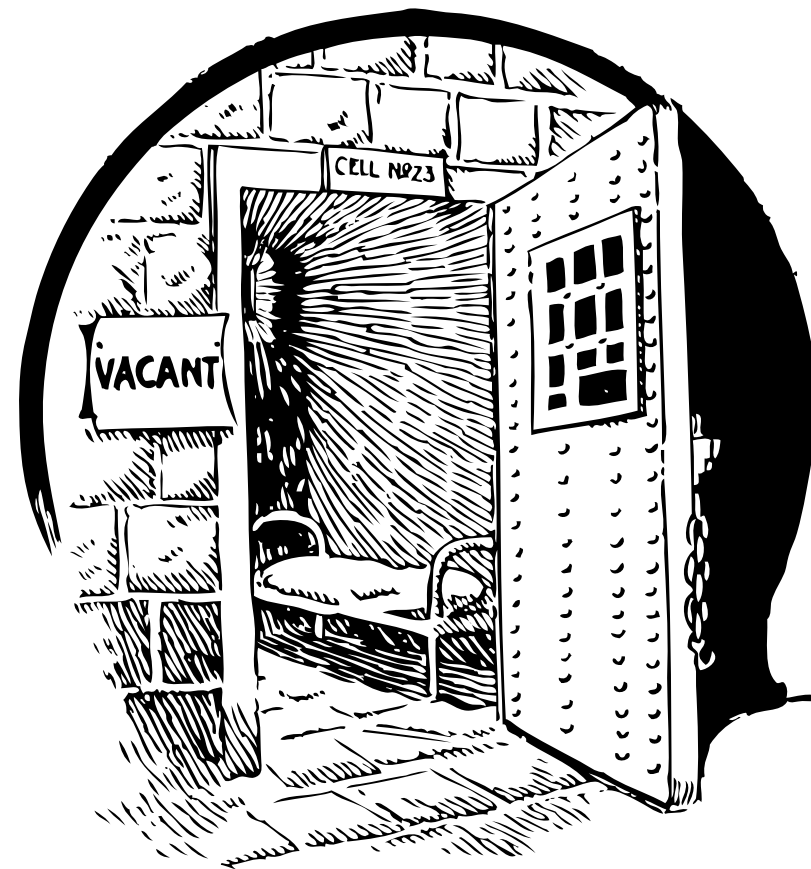
- Novel
- Get outside of reality to free students from "right" answers.



FEELING WHEEL GAME



PLAY WITH IDEAS & STATUS QUO



ESCAPE ROOM

Alt. assignment instead of paper on professional org.



PODCAST

Alt. assignment option to a written paper.



BLOG POST

Alt. assignment for novelty, interest, & succinctness.

PERMISSION TO PLAY

- **Play with ideas.**
- **Play with teaching norms.**
- **Play with your own limits.**
- **Embrace the ambiguity and openness of play.**
- **Inspire students to play with meaning and understanding.**
- **Bring joy back to teaching.**
- **Inspire wonder in learning.**
- **...and have a little FUN!**



Free Book



**SCAN FOR
PLAYFUL
PEDAGOGY
RESOURCES**

-  www.professorsatplay.org
-  lisa.forbes@ucdenver.edu
-  [@PlayProfessors](https://twitter.com/PlayProfessors)
-  [@Professors.at.play](https://www.instagram.com/Professors.at.play)
-  [Professors at Play](https://www.facebook.com/Professors at Play)

