## IMPORTANT COMPETENCES FOR SELF-ORGANISED LEARNING

Among the essential foundations of Self-Organised Learning is the research of Albert Bandura since the early 1940s, especially his Social Cognitive Learning Theory and his work on self-regulation. These works and findings have helped to draw the attention of experts to an important problem: Until the end of the 1970s, it was common to attribute learning success to individual abilities such as intelligence, motor skills, memory or the learning environment. In fact, however, it turned out that many students did not perform convincingly or even failed despite such qualities. In contrast, competencies of self-regulation proved to be much more important for learning success. These include skills such as self-motivation, forward planning and self-assessment (feedback); in addition, particularly successful learners were able to shape their learning environment in a meaningful way and apply goal-oriented learning strategies. According to their self-image, they were autonomous, competent and self-confident. A current empirical research project on the promotion of giftedness and high ability in Germany also came to the conclusion that self-direction was more important for school success than intelligence. These research findings lead to the question of how teachers and trainers in adult education can promote these skills.

COMPETENCES OF SELF-DIRECTION

Here are the most important keywords from the text above:
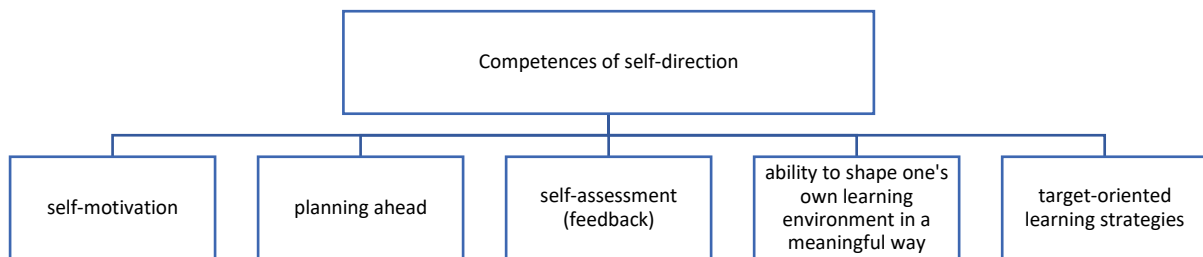
If we now take these individual points as a mission, we can consider together in a next step how we can promote these skills in our participants!
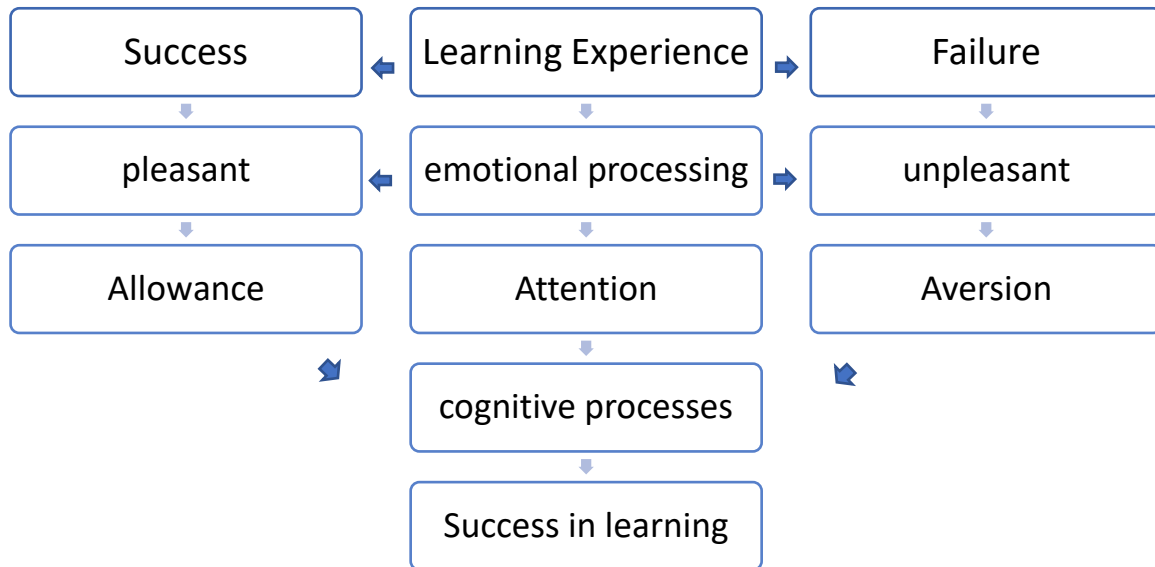
SELF-MOTIVATION

How capable a person is of learning depends, among other things, on what experiences he or she has had with learning in his or her life so far. If someone associates learning with success, these associations evoke pleasant feelings. This positive mood promotes the motivation to want to acquire new knowledge and thus has a direct influence on learning processes. Ultimately, emotions control our attention and thus also how and what we want to learn. Intrinsic motivation is crucial for learning success.
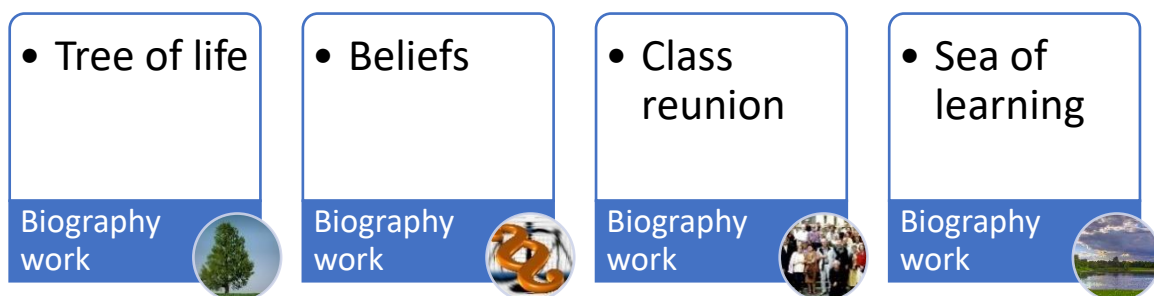
The following graph illustrates the relationship between experiences, associated emotions and the impact on motivation and learning.

Success	← Learning Experience →	Failure
pleasant	← emotional processing →	unpleasant
Allowance	Attention	Aversion
	cognitive processes	
	Success in learning	

This fact that previous learning experiences have a massive influence on educational motivation is often overlooked. Motivation models often aim - as the word suggests - at goals, what someone wants to achieve and which partial steps are necessary for this. We have made the experience that especially educationally disadvantaged groups are once again disadvantaged by such motivation models, because these models do not take into account the obstacles standing in the way of learning.

Therefore, we recommend at this point to first reflect with biographical methods on the experiences that someone has had in connection with learning. This makes it easier to deal with emotions that interfere with learning and pave the way for new experiences.

The following exercises have proven successful in practice:

- Tree of life

  Biography work

- Beliefs

  Biography work

- Class reunion

  Biography work

- Sea of learning

  Biography work

PLANNING AHEAD

For forward planning, the participants must have sufficient decision-making possibilities regarding the following parameters: Goal, content, methods, place and time. In order to ensure that each participant in the group is well involved in this design process, the participants need to regularly and in a structured way evaluate their own learning as well as reflect on the common learning path and plan further steps together. Instruments that make this possible are:
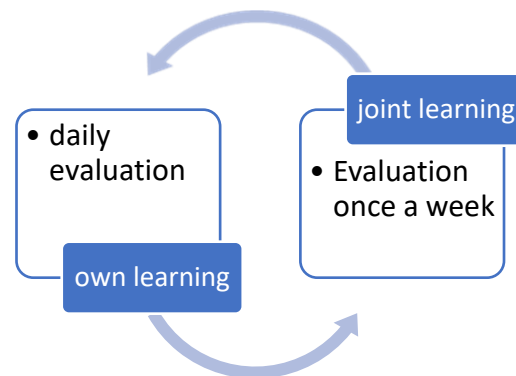
With these tools, one can both evaluate the current state and define the next learning steps - individually and for the learning group:

The learning diary	The learning conference

SELF-ASSESSMENT (FEEDBACK)

Self-organised learning needs feedback right from the start. Therefore, it is essential that you as a trainer prepare this instrument at the beginning of a seminar in such a way that your participants understand its meaning and purpose and can also use feedback. Our experience has shown that you as a trainer are constantly challenged here because although the rules for constructive feedback are very simple and therefore easy to understand, very few people really succeed in implementing and adhering to them. It therefore makes sense to practise the application of these simple rules with your participants.

In self-organised learning, feedback is not only used to facilitate individual learning experiences. In this method, feedback is also used to control processes, i.e. it has an effect on the further planning and content of the seminar.

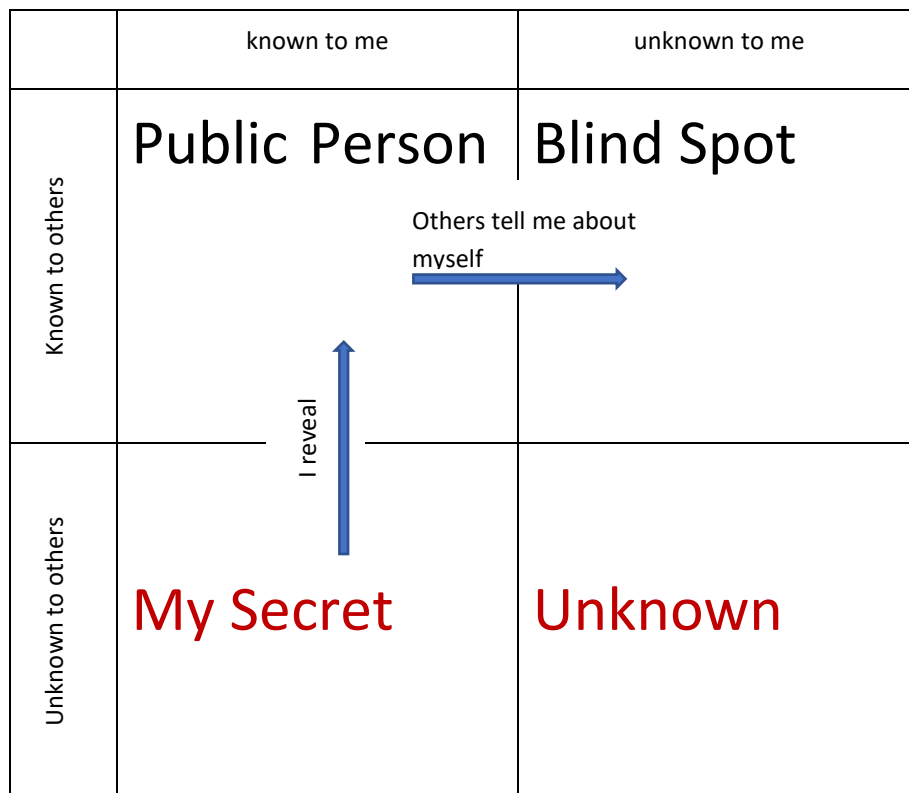## FEEDBACK CULTURE - LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

When giving feedback and especially when taking feedback, people usually leave their comfort zone and immediately enter their growth zone, where new things can be experienced and learned.

We have had good experience with the following tool to make the potential of lived feedback clear to participants:

THE JOHARI WINDOW - WHY INDIVIDUALS CAN BENEFIT FROM FEEDBACK AND WHY THE WHOLE LEARNING GROUP CAN BENEFIT FROM IT:

The Johari Window is a proven tool in group dynamics. It consists of the following four quadrants:

	known to me	unknown to me
Known to others	Public Person	Blind Spot
	Others tell me about myself →	
	I reveal ↑	
Unknown to others	My Secret	Unknown

The individual quadrants of the Johari Window are shown in more detail below.

Public person

Public is everything that a person reveals about him/herself, i.e. what is known to him/herself and to others, in other words: the parts of the personality that are made visible to the outside and perceived by others. This includes

- external characteristics, such as appearance, manners or physical reactions
- as well as - insofar as these are outwardly apparent - personal characteristics, such as ambition or timidity, and
- inner attitudes, such as religiosity, morality and ethical values.

This part of the "window" is usually rather small compared to the other parts. This is because it is mainly the non-public areas, in other words, the non-conscious factors that determine the interactions between people.

My Secret

Secret is everything that the person concerned knows and is aware of - i.e. what he or she is aware of but either unwittingly does not make accessible to others or deliberately hides from them.

Blind Spot

The "blind spot" is everything that is emitted by the affected person and perceived by the receiver without the affected person being aware of it. Others recognise behaviours and characteristics that the affected person does not perceive in themselves. Through feedback from others, information can be transported from the blind spot into the "public" quadrant.

Unknown

Unknown is everything that is neither known to the person concerned nor to others.

Joseph Luft, one of the developers of the Johari Window, describes one goal of learning in group dynamics as making the common scope of action more transparent and wider. In the Johari window, the upper left field becomes larger and larger, the other three become smaller.

Revealing oneself

- Communicating and sharing one's own reflections, experiences and motives with others reduces the effort that had to be put into secrecy.

- This increases the freedom and scope of action of each individual in public.

Sharing observations

- By sharing observations about blind spots directly with those affected (feedback), they gain knowledge about themselves!

- In this way, he/she can perceive and fill his/her private and public scope for action more consciously.

Both ways complement each other and also help to make the unconscious conscious and thus manageable.

Furthermore, another important purpose of feedback in the context of self-organised learning is that the participants learn something about the way they work together. Such learning experiences serve to help everyone learn how to best contribute to the group, thus enhancing the teamwork skills of your participants.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

For self-assessment, we use two proven tools in our seminars:

The learning diary **The learning conference**

While the learning diary helps your seminar participants to reflect on the basis of structured questions at the end of each seminar day whether and how they can deepen what they have learned on that day, the learning conference helps to keep an eye on the overall process and to transparently plan the next learning step for the group.

ABILITY TO MEANINGFULLY SHAPE ONE'S OWN LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Let us recall the different parameters of self-organised learning. Parameters that relate to the design of the learning environment are:

Parameters	Definition
Methods	Different teaching styles as well as the different ways of learning.
Location	The definition of learning must be understood in terms of different teaching styles, different ways of learning, seminar facilities, workshops, etc., as well as nature with all its resources.
Time	When, how long and how often does one learn?

Depending on how much freedom your participants have to participate in the seminar, the following useful activities can be derived for the design of the learning environment. Support your participants in any case, depending on their possibilities, to design their workplace in the seminar in the best possible way!

- A good workplace should provide the opportunity for quiet so that you can concentrate for a longer period of time.

Distraction-free environment

- It is important to have enough light to avoid fatigue. Additionally, the lighting mood can have a great influence on how one feels.

Good light

- A good filing system not only makes work much more efficient, but also helps you to find what you need quickly.

Good filing system

- If you don't have the right materials to hand immediately, you not only lose time, but also focus. Every time you have to look for something, it takes some time to get into the flow again!

Work material ready to hand

- Show your participants different methods of learning that make use of the spatial conditions. Learning can also take place on the move, for example by walking in pairs from learning poster to learning poster and discussing the content together.

Diversity of methods

- A good workplace offers enough space to develop and distracts as little as possible. Our brains are absolute masters when it comes to scanning the environment for exciting distractions. For this reason, it is advisable to design your own workspace to be relatively sparse and functional, but open to your own sprawl.

Creative sparseness

- You should feel comfortable at your workplace - especially if you want to learn there! Give your participants the opportunity to make their workspace functional but personal. This is a fine line, but it is very important. Particularly suitable are, for example, a few plants or a few less distracting pictures that give the whole thing its own stamp!

Don't forget the feel-good factor

- If you want to or have to work creatively, you need the possibility to quickly put your thoughts down on paper. It is especially nice to have the chance to work with the space and develop thoughts on a small whiteboard or pinboard, for example. Other possibilities are: static notes that stick to the wall; poster paper that you can hang up; a roll of flipchart paper that turns the floor into a blackboard; a few water-soluble markers and a window!

Visualisation and structuring possibilities

TARGET-ORIENTED LEARNING STRATEGIES

Many adults have to learn to learn at their age. Here again, educationally disadvantaged groups are particularly affected. So before you can start self-organised learning with a group, it is more than advisable to work out different learning techniques with the participants.

As a trainer in adult education, you naturally have a variety of different learning techniques at your disposal. We have only listed a small number of methods that are helpful in practice.

- Most seminar participants find it helpful to summarise a text or the contents of the seminar folder and to reproduce it in their own words. Colours and notes mark the most important passages and help the eye to orientate itself.

Summaries

- Suggest to your participants to collect difficult words with a corresponding definition in a list. If a participant forgets the word or its meaning, he/she can quickly look it up. In addition, your participants will learn the unknown words while looking them up and copying the explanations.

Collect technical terms

- Mindmaps, diagrams or tables are an excellent way of structuring and illustrating the learning material. Participants can draw them on a large poster and hang it up in a visible place.

Learning posters

- Help your participants to divide the learning material into portions. It must be possible to process what has been learned. This requires time and division.

Division