

The Lie We've Been Told About PD

Elena: If you've ever walked out of a PD session wondering what the point was, then this episode is for you. Hello, friends. Welcome to the Bright Morning Podcast. I'm your host Elena Aguilar, and in each episode you'll learn how to lead conversations that build connection and spark real change. All right, today we are kicking off a brand new series for PD providers and for meeting facilitators.

And we're starting with a big idea. We've been told a lie about what professional development is supposed to be, and it's time to name it and replace it with something better. Years ago, I sat through a district mandated PD that left me feeling discouraged. It was 90 minutes of lecture. 90 minutes of slide after slide.

There was no interaction. There was no joy. And I remember glancing around the room and some people were grading papers, others, quite a few were scrolling on their phones, and everyone looked like they were just waiting it out. And I thought, this isn't professional development. This is punishment. And the worst part was that I had gotten used to this.

I had come to expect that PD was something to sit through, to tolerate, or maybe to survive, and maybe you have too, but this is a lie. It's a myth. PD shouldn't be passive. It shouldn't be transactional. It shouldn't drain people. And it definitely shouldn't feel like something that we just endure.

Professional development should be transformational. It should spark insight. It should build confidence and invite reflection. It should help people grow in what they know, what they believe, and how they show up. And that's what we support facilitators to create in the PD workshop, and that's what this podcast series is all about.

It's about how to design and lead learning that truly makes a difference. So today I want to give you a simple but powerful tool that you can use right away. Whether you are facilitating PD or attending it, it's a five question reflection that I call the PD impact check. So here's how it works. After any PD experience, ask, what did I learn?

What might I do differently as a result? How did this experience make me feel? Were my experiences and identity acknowledged and respected, and did this



experience shift my behavior, beliefs, or way of being even slightly? So if your answers to most of these questions are no, then that's not a reason to feel bad.

It's actually helpful because it means you have clarity about what was missing, and that kind of clarity can give you direction. So let's break this down a bit. If you didn't learn anything new, ask yourself, did this session meet your current needs. Did it offer? Offer meaningful, relevant content? If not, that might be a signal to seek out PD that's more personalized or that aligns more closely with what you're curious about.

And if you don't feel motivated to do anything differently, then ask why. Maybe the content felt too theoretical. Or maybe you didn't get a chance to apply it. So that's a cue to look for PD that includes real opportunities to practice or plan, and if you felt drained, unseen, or discouraged, try to name what would have helped.

Was it the facilitation style, the way that participants were engaged? Naming. This helps you recognize what kind of learning environments support you and which ones don't. Alright? Now, if you are the one facilitating pd, then these five questions can be a game changer. Walk yourself through them. After each session reflect honestly on what landed and what didn't.

And if you wanna scale this up, offer these questions to your participants as a closing activity and invite them to jot down a few thoughts. Now, you could do this as a survey, which could be anonymous, or you could have folks debrief in pairs, and their responses will give you insight that you simply can't access on your own.

And then you wanna look for patterns. Are people learning but not applying what they learned? Are they showing up but not feeling seen? Are you witnessing or are people experiencing shifts in behavior but not in beliefs? These questions don't just help you evaluate impact. They help you design for it.

They help you align your sessions with what really matters. So here's a story to bring this home. A facilitator I coached once used this reflection after a pd she thought had gone pretty well. She felt like the energy in the room was high. She thought people were engaged. They completed the tasks. But when she reviewed the reflection responses.

A few things stood out. Several people said that they still weren't sure how to apply what they learned. A few others noted that there wasn't time to process or



to personalize the strategies, and one person wrote, I enjoyed the session, but I didn't really feel seen in the examples that were shared. And that was a humbling moment, and it gave her what she needed to make meaningful adjustments next time.

Not just in the content, but in how she connected with participants. So when you use these five questions consistently, something powerful happens. You stop designing PD to simply cover content. You start designing for impact on hearts, minds, and actions. So here's your challenge. Use this reflection after your next pd, whether you are facilitating it or attending it, and ask yourself those five questions.

And then let your answers guide what you do next. So in the show notes, you will find a link to the PD workshop and the Art of Virtual facilitation. And those are two spaces where we teach you how to lead professional learning that actually transforms. All right, friends, thanks for being here with me today.

If this episode helped you to imagine a new kind of pd, would you share it with a colleague? And if you are listening on Apple Podcasts, I would be so grateful if you would leave us a five star rating and review, because that helps other people find the show. And if you are watching me on YouTube, then hit like.

Also subscribe so you won't miss what's coming next. And if you're not watching on YouTube yet, come and join us in the show notes. You're gonna find a link to our YouTube. Okay? This show is produced by LesLee Bickford and Stacey Goodman does the sound engineering. Take care, folks, and I'll see you next time.

