Why learn?
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Life will go on. We, meaning us, human kind, are not what make the Earth spin. We do not sustain the orbit around the sun, nor the axis that creates our day and night. In fact, we are just another piece of the puzzle that builds itself each day. Yet, we consider ourselves to be the most important pieces of that puzzle, because we can “think.” Humans have pursued and achieved things like space travel and nuclear science, yet we are still just pieces like all the other species. That leads to the question – Why do we try so hard to understand and control so much, if at the end of the day we seem to have such a small influence on the universe?

I believe that the answer is very simple; instinct says to learn. In the case of learning, instincts only start a process. If something is thrown at us, we move, that instinct is often enough to keep us safe from flying objects. When we look at learning things become complicated because one of the first lessons actually encourages us to learn less, that lesson would be about the economic use of resources. Survival, ultimately, depends on effective consumption of resources, which is why the tortoise usually beats the hare. Learning adheres to this principle as well. As the lessons become more challenging, those who use their resources wisely have more time to rest between lessons. Because we have such complex brains, we also get to analyze the principle and realize that it may be more economic to only partially learn some lessons and maybe even outsource a few. This is what actually slows our instinct to learn.

As a learner, I am not very economic. I tend to focus on many parts that I should actually outsource. The Internet and computers are both my nemesis and my ally in this ongoing battle of resource management. Technology has always been an interest of mine, so I enjoy using its tools and understanding how things work. The problem is that as I try to understand and learn, I lose sight of the specific task and focus on other parts of the picture. The greatest asset of technology is that it offers tools that can help us streamline and coordinate our ideas and information. This can increase our efficiency and ultimately make us better survivors. The key is to know how to find the balance between what needs to be accomplished and what is interesting but not necessary for the task at hand.

I am tired of waste. Our society loves to waste everything from water to printers. I have a quotation on a magnet that says, “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” (Ghandi) I wish to be a more effective learner, so that I can be a more effective teacher. I have learned many new technologies in the last few years. I want to apply those technologies in ways that allow my students, and myself, to benefit from the opportunities offered by these tools. I want to use the Web to maintain, and contain, ideas and information, so that it can be retrieved and viewed easily. I want to help students truly understand the concept of the “writing process,” by helping them review and reuse the work that they create – by using and maintaining Web portfolios. Mostly, I want to help us all realize how important it is for us to have a worldview, if we want to continue to exist on this planet. Learning is
the key to this final wish. We must continue to inspire and teach our children to search for new answers to the old questions, so that we as a species continue to survive.

Why learn?
Learn not to control the world, but to understand it.
Learn so that you are never without the tools needed to solve a problem.
Learn about things that interest you so that you can share them with others.

My philosophy is that learning begins as an instinct but must be nurtured. We must listen to that instinct and work with our personal skills to constantly challenge our abilities. Learning must be an activity that we pursue and must be practiced constantly. To teach is to try to help others hone their skills, and strengthen their abilities, so that they are stronger learners. I will push myself, and my students, so that we do not become numb to that instinct that drives us to learn.

Thank you.