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Teaching Philosophy

**RISK** (verb) – to act or **fail to act** in such a way as to bring about the possibility of an unpleasant or unwelcome event.

As teachers, we walk a constant tightrope of desperately wanting to keep our students' minds and hearts and bodies healthy, while also pushing them to dig a little deeper, to risk a little more, because that's what we must do, as storytellers. To find and share their voice as an artist, or indeed, any profession, they have to find the balance between keeping themselves safe and risking it all.

As a professor, I find myself constantly trying to demystify the F-word. FAIL. More and more, I find that our students would rather sit frozen and safe in their silence of 'maybe' than bravely voicing their opinions or acting on their impulses. These freshmen have been indoctrinated to study for the test, which means for most of their classes, their answers are right or wrong, no middle ground, and certainly no gold star for a guess. The limits of this unfortunate methodology is why I feel the freedom of a Liberal Arts education is essential to developing not only young actors but young minds. No matter what profession they choose to pursue, the ability to speak their thoughts with clarity and imagination will serve them in every facet of their personal and professional life. If I can get them to at least intellectually understand the need to fail in order to learn, then perhaps I can start working on the hard part...the *doing* of it.

My objective as an educator and director is to create a safe environment in which students realize that to risk failure is to build emotional courage, and with each successive attempt to find their fearlessness, they empower themselves to use their voice in our work, regardless of medium. For all of their performance classes, from acting and movement to theatre history and script analysis (and everything in between), I want to share with them the solid foundation and repeatable techniques of each discipline and encourage them to make it their own. I believe that our work in theatre is essential to developing humanity as a whole, and my mission is to nurture young adults to mature into engaging and involved members of a global society who learn to reason, to imagine, and to believe in themselves.

If I have provided an open community of shared ideas, a foundation of mutual trust and respect, and a safe place to risk in an environment that rewards the attempt, regardless of outcome, I truly think I have made a difference to anyone who walks into my class or auditions for my show. And that, more than anything, is what I really want. I want to nurture, to push, to cheerlead, to collaborate, and to celebrate the entire process of my students' growth in school and beyond. No matter what profession they choose to pursue, the ability to own their bodies and speak their thoughts with clarity and imagination will serve them well. But if they do choose the path of an artist, I feel my job is to teach them how to risk, and in the doing, continue to fail beautifully. Because if they are risking, then they are *trying*, and I can't think of anything more rewarding than to watch students surprise themselves.