

**Harmin, Merrill. Strategies to Inspire Active Learning. ASCD. 1995.****Truth Signs**

**Purpose:** for solid student confidence

**Post:** Everyone needs time to think and learn.

We each learn in our own ways, by our own time clocks

It's okay to make mistakes. That's the way we learn.

It's intelligent to ask for help. No one needs to do it all alone.

We can learn more and do more when we are willing to risk.

Discuss and post the signs at the beginning of the year to create an accepting, safe environment. Discuss the signs as needed each day.

Everyone needs time to  
think and learn.

1. Let's read this together, '*Everyone needs time to think and learn.*' Let's say it again, with power. Yes, it is true. When we hear something or try something, we don't usually learn it right away. It takes a little time for us to make sense of it, get it inside us. Even if I say something simple, like my mother was born in England, it might take a second for you to make sense of what those words mean.

I want to post this sign on our wall so we remember it. It's an important truth. It can help us keep our learning climate healthy. You can use it to remind yourself to give yourself enough time when you want to learn something. You don't want to rush it. Why? Because, as the sign says, everyone needs time to think and learn.

Let's read the words aloud again, together, to help us internalize it, get it more fully inside us. All together: '*Everyone needs time to think and learn.*' Again please, with more power. Thank you.

We each learn in our own ways, by  
our own time clocks.

2. Let's look at another sign. Let's say it all together... and again, this time with more power. This sign too is true. We each learn in our own ways, no one quite like the other. Some learn best from words, some from pictures, some from experimenting, some from talking things out with other people. We each have our own favorite ways, it's true, isn't it?

And we each learn according to our own time clocks, some fast, some slow. All of us learn only when the time is right for us.

I, for example, didn't learn to spell very well until I was much older than my classmates. My time to learn to spell just did not come when it came to most others. But later, when the time was right, I became a fairly good speller. You might have had a similar experience. How many of you tried to learn something, or were told you *should* learn something, but it just did not work until you were older, until somehow the time became right?

Yes, it is true that we each learn in our own ways and by our own time clocks. We want to remember this sign. Let's say it again together, to get it deeper inside us. Again, this time with energy. We will keep this sign in our classroom along with the first one, to remind us of this truth. Sometimes we forget it. We may think we *should* learn something the way others are learning it. But their way may not be the best for us. We have to search for our own best way to learn. Or we may think we should have learned something *already*, because others have already learned it. That may just get us feeling down on ourselves. And that will make it harder for us to keep up our energy and keep on learning. So please don't get down on yourself if you don't learn the way other people learn, and if you don't learn when other people learn. That would be foolish, for we each learn in our *own* ways, by our *own* time clocks, right?

It's okay to make mistakes.  
That's the way we learn.

3. Here's another sign: Let's say it all together. And again.

And that too, is true. Even the first time we walk, we stumble around, fall down, get up, try again. The first time we try anything new we are apt to make a mistake, until we get it.

It makes no sense to get down on ourselves when we make a mistake. We can eventually get so afraid of making mistakes that we are afraid even to try. And that is silly. For the truth is that it is okay to make mistakes. That's the way we learn. That's just what happens when we start learning.

All together again. Once more, saying it like you mean it! Yes, we want to remember that mistakes are not unfortunate when we're learning. They are necessary. It's the way we learn.

It's intelligent to ask for help.  
No one needs to do it all alone.

4. Now look at this one: I would say that, too, is true. Look, I don't have to be able to manufacture cars and grow food and construct roads and paint pictures and design shirts. I just need to know how to do what I do. No one has to know it all.

If I need to do something I can't do, it's intelligent to ask for help from someone who can do it. Then I get what I need and, often, the other person gets the pleasure of helping. Don't you sometimes feel good when you can be helpful to someone?

That's what a community of people does. They help one another. One person delivers the mail. Another mows the lawn. One cooks. Another builds. Old folks sit outside and smile on us. Young people play outside and act silly. It takes all of us to make a community. No one has to do it all alone. We can help one another.

In fact, it is *intelligent* to help one another. It would be dumb for someone to try to do everything all alone. So, please, in this class, if you need help, if you don't know what to do, or you need someone to explain something, ask someone for help. It's *intelligent* to ask for help. Everything works better that way. We can become one happy team, one community that way.

So, all together now. Let's read that sign again, with lots of power!

We can do more and learn more  
when we are willing to risk.

5. Let's look at one last sign today. Let's say you want to do something. Try something new, or talk to someone, or speak up in class. What you want to do might *seem* like a good thing to do, but it can *feel* risky. That often happens to people. We want to do something. Our minds say it would be good to do it. But our feelings say hold it, it's risky! We want to back off.

What then? Are we not to act? Sometimes the risk is really too great. We might get hurt or hurt someone else. Then it would be smart to stop, not to do what we thought of doing. But sometimes the risk is really not that large. There is no real danger. It just *feels* risky.

What we can do then, is call on our courage and go right through the anxiety. Speak out, if that is what we wanted to do. Or join a new group. Or jump into the swimming pool. Or whatever it is we wanted to do. The key is a willingness to act, even when it feels risky, even when acting will feel uncomfortable. Then all we need to do is call up our courage and get started.

When we can call up our courage that way, we can do more and learn more. When we cannot, we often do nothing. We are stuck in inaction. We may not even be able to think straight about the situation. We may become limited to doing only what feels very comfortable.

But when we are willing to make use of our courage and risk, we can think about whether there is real danger or not and, if not, we can get going and do it, even though we know starting will be uncomfortable. That is why we can do more and learn more when we are willing to risk. That sign is just plain true.

Let's repeat the sign together! And say it like you mean it!