

How to build confidence in your teaching skill – a guide for new teachers

This short article will give new teachers some pointers on how to build their confidence when first starting out teaching metal clay. As with most things in life, the more you practice something, the easier it gets and the better you get at doing it. One of the most difficult things for those new to teaching is starting.

1. So it might be helpful to start by teaching someone you know. Choose a friend or relative who's interested in metal clay and run a training session for them. Plan it as if they are a paying customer, set the room up and run the session as if it this is a real lesson. That way you'll be able to assess your planning and amend things that don't go the way you thought they would. Ask the person you train for feedback on your training style – did you explain things enough, was the pace too fast, too slow or about right. Have a look at the example feedback form and get your friendly student to assess you honestly. You need this feedback to build your confidence but also to find out what would make your training even better next time. It's essential that your friendly student is honest with you.
2. Another useful exercise is to assist an experienced metal clay teacher whose style you admire. Watching how they set up the room, organise the training, explain and demonstrate the techniques can help you with your own planning and teaching. Having a teacher mentor you can be the quickest way to build your confidence and gain valuable feedback on your teaching technique.
3. Often new teachers are concerned about teaching larger classes so why not start with a one-to-one? When you get more confident, restrict your class size so you can keep control of the lesson.
4. Offer to do a short demonstration for free. This can help you build up your confidence and also may result in people booking on your classes. Make sure you take business cards or flyers for your classes!
5. If you can, get some formal training in how to teach. This should include actual teaching practice with detailed feedback from your tutor to help you refine your teaching style.
6. Take classes. A great way to learn how to teach (and sometimes how not to teach) is to take classes. Watch the way the teacher handles the class, how they explain things and deal with things that don't go to plan. Make notes of what you like about the way they run things – and anything you don't like – and assess where you can incorporate the positive things into your training. Pay particular attention to how their teaching style makes you feel as a student. When you teach, you can sometimes forget what it's like to be a student. This is especially important if you teach beginners. Taking classes in subjects you know nothing about can help to remind you how it feels to be a beginner. Use this knowledge to make your students feel safe and supported.

Bibliography

These books are recommended by the MCA Board. They include books about teaching and other subjects our board found particularly useful in working with students in creative fields.

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