Susie Wise: [00:00:00] In order to be a learner, we have to identify ourselves as a learner. And belonging is critical to that self-identity piece.

Celisa Steele: [00:00:15] I'm Celisa Steele.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:16] I'm Jeff Cobb, and this is the Leading Learning Podcast.

Celisa Steele: [00:00:25] To be a learner, we have to identify as a learner, and belonging is critical to self-identification. That means all learning businesses need to think about how they can create situations and offerings where individuals feel a sense of belonging. Dr. Susie Wise is a learning experience designer and author of the book *Design for Belonging: How to Build Inclusion and Collaboration in Your Communities*. Susie coaches leaders in equity design and innovation practices and teaches at the d.school at Stanford. Susie and Jeff talk about the fundamental role of belonging in learning, eight moments of belonging that Susie has identified, and ways to intentionally design learning experiences where belonging can emerge. Jeff and Susie spoke in April 2023.

Jeff Cobb: [00:01:21] Could you tell listeners just a bit more about the work that you do?

Susie Wise: [00:01:26] Yes. My work sits at the intersection of design and community building, particularly with a lens of both equity and complexity. I work with all kinds of people in all kinds of organizations, mostly adult learners, which I know are what your podcast listeners are really interested in. And I do sometimes teach at the Stanford d.school, and that is with graduate students. Those tend to be folks that are coming from a wide variety of disciplines because our focus at the d.school is really on this pedagogy of design thinking, the approach to human-centered design, where we value empathy and prototyping, and we try to embrace complexity and navigate ambiguity.

This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode361.

page 1 of 14

Jeff Cobb: [00:02:18] I love embracing complexity and navigating ambiguity. It's such a big part of learning, broadly, that we all have to do throughout our lives. Now, a big focus of our conversation today is going to be the topic of belonging, which you have written a book about, *Design for Belonging*, specifically with an eye towards communities. It'd be great to start out with that word *belonging* and defining it—or describing it might be the better approach. And then how did that become such a focus for you?

Susie Wise: [00:02:55] Absolutely. Thank you. So belonging, as you say, in the way of describing it, I am pretty expansive in the book about thinking about belonging, and I think it's really important for us to start acknowledging that belonging is a feeling, and it's that feeling of being welcomed and invited in. And by "invited in," [I mean] not just to show up but to actually be your authentic self, to bring your gifts to the context. That is what it feels like to belong, to know that you are deeply and wholly accepted to show up as your whole self.

Jeff Cobb: [00:03:34] I like that you emphasize that it's a feeling. People talk about having a sense of belonging or that feeling of belonging.

Susie Wise: [00:03:41] Yes. Just on that note, that sense of belonging really matters because it's in your body, and it is, in fact, something that if we don't acknowledge it—well, I'll say it the other way. I think belonging, once we acknowledge it's a feeling that we need to have, then we can look to notice, wow, we need to have it to show up as a learner. We need to have it to show up as a worker. We need to have it to show up as a partner, as a participant. It's really fundamental. Belonging sits in current visualizations of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it kind of sits in the middle. This is total hearsay, but, supposedly, Maslow's students were thinking that it should actually go lower down in the pyramid because it is fundamental to who we get to be in the context of other humans, and we're almost always in the context of other humans.

Jeff Cobb: [00:04:39] Exactly. And it does feel very foundational. And that notion, too, of being intentional about it, being conscious of it, and being intentional about it ourselves, and also as people who are designing or trying to facilitate and create experiences for others, you have to be aware of it if you want people to really feel like they can be part of that experience and get something out of that experience.

Susie Wise: [00:05:01] Yes. One of the ways that I came to do this work on *Design for Belonging* was related to what you just said—the fundamental nature of it and the need to be able to feel it. Where this work came from was that I was working with school leaders. This was in the context of K-12 education in the United States. I was working with leaders on how they might

This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode361.

page 2 of 14

use design mindsets to change the culture of their school and, in particular, to serve their students furthest from opportunity. And we were framing that work as thinking about the equity challenges in their school. But one of the things that I noticed is that word, which can be a strangely contentious word, was sometimes throwing folks off. It would take them to a technical place where they started thinking about numbers and discipline. And numbers about discipline can be really important to dig into, so I'm not knocking that. But what I found was that it was causing them to freeze up in their work. It was a mentor of mine at the National Equity Project who shared with me a little bit of the work of john powell, and he has this piece on Othering & Belonging that he wrote with Stephen Menendian. And that framework I shared with the leaders that I was working with, this idea of othering and belonging.

Susie Wise: [00:06:22] What I found was that it really unlocked people because thinking about belonging and remembering when and where they've had that sense of belonging that we spoke of really reminded them of what they were trying to do when they were doing equity work, that it wasn't an abstraction about numbers. It was actually that they were trying to think about, "Wow, who in my," in their case school. We could think about the folks listening to this podcast, in your organization, or the learners that you're hoping to serve. Who's walking into that room already feeling like they belong because they walk into every room feeling like they belong? And who might be questioning? And there are a number of reasons why you might be questioning your belonging. But, if we focus on belonging and remember our own places of feeling of belonging, then it opens us up to the design conversation because the other side of the work here is how do we think about design? How do we intentionally create situations where belonging can emerge? And I say belonging can emerge because, again, belonging is a feeling. I can't make anybody feel it, but I can use all kinds of things to help it come forward and to help somebody know that they can belong here.

Jeff Cobb: [00:07:37] A number of different threads to pull out there, and I want to do our best to pull all of them during the course of this conversation. Before we go into talking about experiences that we may have and other people may have or designing for them, I'm wondering is there something personal in this for you that's driving your interest? Do you have a personal story, personal relationship with belonging that informs some of the work that you're doing?

Susie Wise: [00:08:05] Thank you. And I'd like to invite everybody to have that inquiry too. I have multiple. And I didn't start from the place of reflecting on that. But, as I saw leaders being able to use this frame of othering and belonging, then I started asking myself, "Where have I belonged, and where have I not?" And indeed—I tell this story in the book—I could locate some

This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode361.

page 3 of 14

moments in my childhood where I really had a strong sense of not belonging, and I could then look into those moments and mine them for what could have been different. I will say—since we're in audio land—I am a white woman. I have some of the privileges that come with being a white-skinned person in our contemporary American culture. I haven't had discrimination on those levels, but I have definitely had experiences, particularly in graduate school and in taking computer science courses, where I had real strong senses of not belonging, and I would have to coach myself on the walk to the building, in the elevator, to the class, like, "No, I'm in this class. I'm in this class. I'm in this class. I can be in this class." And even try to convince myself, "They need my perspective. I'm bringing a different perspective."

Susie Wise: [00:09:30] So those are some of the memories that came to me as I started working on it. And it's, in part, why, again, I think this frame of belonging is helpful because all kinds of people with all kinds of backgrounds and identities can probably find a place, even if it's rare, where they haven't felt belonging. Even if you're going back to that birthday party you went to when you were nine years old and you didn't know how to play the game—whatever, how small or insignificant—I think if we can ground in a story of a time and place of belonging and of not belonging, it sets us up for the kind of inquiry that we want to do.

Jeff Cobb: [00:10:06] I feel certain everybody has felt it at one point or another in their lives. I can probably even come up with recent times; most of us can. And that whole idea of coaching yourself—self-talk sounds very productive to make sure you are in a dialog with yourself around this—that I do belong. That part of your mindset is that you can grow, you can adapt, you can be part of this, and that's completely legitimate. To make sure you're always checking in on that, you provide a number of exercises throughout your book, which I think are great. And at least one of them is around thinking about those experiences of your own where you might have felt that sense of either belonging or not belonging, of *othering*—the word you use around that. I think that's so important for ourselves as individuals, but, also, if you're going to have the empathy that you need to have, you have to be able to do that, I would think.

Susie Wise: [00:11:02] Yes, absolutely. Another exercise that I really find helpful for teams to use in their work, for educators or for learning experience designers to use with people that have participated in their programs, is the emotional journey map. That is a tool where you just think about the y-axis as positive and negative feelings of belonging, and then the x-axis is time. And so that could be the start of this program, the start of this semester, or whatever the context is, the unit of time that you want to think about, it could be this conference experience, and to invite people to mark what are some highs and lows and then have conversations about that. It's a great qualitative tool to use to understand what people's experience really is, and that then

This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode361.

page 4 of 14

sets you up to be able to dig into "Wow, are we noticing any patterns? Was this particular part of our flow a moment where a lot of people said that they didn't feel a very strong sense of belonging?" That might be a moment, then, to really attend to and to think about redesigning or reimagining.

Celisa Steele: [00:12:28] As someone who listens to the Leading Learning Podcast, you should know about the Leading Learning newsletter, which you can subscribe to at leadinglearning.com/inbox. The newsletter is inbox intelligence for learning businesses and helps you understand the latest technology, marketing, and learning trends and grow your learning business. Best of all, it's a free resource. As a subscriber, you get Leading Links, our monthly curated collection of resources to help you grow the reach, revenue, and impact of your learning business; the podcast digest, a monthly summary of podcast episodes released during the previous month; plus, periodic announcements highlighting Leading Learning Webinars and other educational opportunities designed to benefit learning business professionals. Subscribe, for free, at leadinglearning.com/inbox. And, if you're already subscribed, point a colleague to leadinglearning.com/inbox.

Jeff Cobb: [00:13:28] And we've already been referencing it some, this whole idea of belonging and how it factors into learning and the experiences that we have in learning. I'd love to talk about some of the specific types of experiences that we tend to have as adults—going to conferences, of course, being part of different discussion communities, and things like that. But I think it would also be interesting to talk about belonging at a more fundamental, foundational level because we live in a world now where it's been gratifying for me to see that the concept of lifelong learning has become a big thing now. People have to be learners. You have to grow and adapt. But even to identify as a learner or as a lifelong learner, that's a category that we're creating and telling people they need to be a part of, and I'm not sure everybody feels equally prepared to belong to that category. Can you talk a little bit about belonging as it relates to being a learner in general and an adult learner specifically?

Susie Wise: [00:14:31] Yes, absolutely. And you're exactly right. Belonging is fundamental. One of the people that I reference in the book is Dr. Camille Farrington, and she's out of the University of Chicago. She studies high schools in particular, but the work extends to adult learning environments as well. In order to be a learner, we have to identify ourselves as a learner. And belonging is critical to that self-identity piece. We have to be able to see ourselves in the room, in the course, in those ways of being that we're trying to activate, and [in] that learning experience. That's the fundamental piece. And then I think the interesting thing about that is, if we're recognizing that that isn't necessarily what our group is feeling, that we have

This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode361.

page 5 of 14

folks who, perhaps, weren't successful in prior learning experiences, that they didn't feel like that was a place of acceptance or success, how can we show that these adult learning spaces—whether they're formal or informal, online or in-person—are really places for you to get to show up and be yourself? And that's where this idea of some particular moments to pay attention to, I think, can come into play.

Jeff Cobb: [00:15:59] Well, this might be a great time to turn to that because you devote a significant portion of your book to what you describe as those "moments of belonging." It'd be great, first of all, to talk a little bit about those, what are some of those moments that you've defined, and then a little bit about how they tend to play out in your typical adult learning-type experiences, say a conference or a continuing education class that somebody is going to.

Susie Wise: [00:16:31] Great. I talk about eight moments of belonging, and I'll say, too, I think they are ones that really matter and are useful. I also think that anybody who is planning, designing, or organizing learning experiences might have some additional ones that they want to name that are particularly true to their context. Certainly feel free to not think that these are from on high. They're just a way to start to think about the power of particular moments. That's the first move to make, is to not be thinking of all time as one thing, but recognizing, again, particularly for adult learners, that they're used to using their time in lots of different ways. They want to have agency over their time, etcetera. So some of the moments I think about—and shout-out for folks that have seen the book—there's a great mural artist who helps to create these pages, and there are these fold-out pages, and so they flow in an interesting way.

Susie Wise: [00:17:30] One moment to think about is the invitation. We may be pretty used to this, but it always matters to really double down on the invitation. That's not just time, date, and place. That is who do you get to be if you show up to this learning experience? Why do we want you to come to it? What might your role get to be if you come here? Then, thinking about entering, really being conscious that crossing the threshold is a moment that matters for your belonging. Actually, we know, from the work of Claude Steele and others around stereotype threat, it's in the moment of entry that often we're on high alert, and stereotype threat can be triggered. And so that notion of "Oh, I might not belong because I don't see other people that look like me or sound like me" or any other kinds of identifiers isn't being called forth.

Jeff Cobb: [00:18:33] I love that image. It's like standing on the threshold. That is the point where we're scanning, we're judging, and we're making our decisions about "Is this for me or not?"

This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode361.

page 6 of 14

Susie Wise: [00:18:43] Yes. That's where it's a great moment to have creativity. What can you do with that moment so people actually want to just run on in (as a metaphor) and not just stand on the sidelines? It's, again, probably a moment that you can remember from adolescence, of a really awkward threshold moment, and that's not what you're trying to create in your adult learning experience. So paying attention to that entry, that threshold, really matters. Then, of course, we have participating, the meat of the matter, but I also really like to pair that with the moment of contributing. What I found in my work and as I was doing interviews and having conversations with early versions of these tools [was that] I didn't actually have contributing as a moment. At first, I had a moment that I called "the dance," which is like being in the flow, but often people refer to that in very literal ways. But when I was having conversations with people about the dance, what I realized they were really talking about was contributing. That I showed up, whether I got to ask a question—that's pretty low bar—did I get to actually participate by building part of a mural or building part of a tool? That wants to be a kind of active participation, where I actually got to leave feeling like I contributed to something. I moved the movement forward in some way, in whatever context it is. So that really matters.

Susie Wise: [00:20:12] I also really like to help us pay attention to some moments that we're less comfortable talking about, like dissent. What do we do, and how do we design for people to give critical feedback to say, "Actually, this didn't work for me." Or "Can we take a break now? Because this has gone on longer than I wanted it to." That wants to get designed in from the get-go, so that I know that that's part of my belonging. Because, actually, if I'm able to offer feedback, positive or negative, and see it taken up by the organization, by the context, by the event, conference, whatever it is, wow, I feel like I've participated, I've contributed, and somebody actually took my feedback up. That builds my belonging. So that's a moment that really matters.

Jeff Cobb: [00:21:02] I think that's such an interesting one because, if you're sitting in, say, a conference session or your average class, there are always going to be some people who are fine with speaking up. If they've got something, they're going to get it out there. But you may or may not have those people in the room, and then you've probably got any number of people in the room who are thinking, "No, no, this isn't right. Don't want to do it," but they're not going to say anything because they don't really feel invited to say anything. And so it might show up on an evaluation—that tends to be the main form of dissent that happens there.

Susie Wise: [00:21:30] Right. And that's a little late.

Jeff Cobb: [00:21:31] Yes.

This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode361.

page 7 of 14

Susie Wise: [00:21:32] Potentially, maybe it changes things for next year, but, exactly to your point, I think there's a space. And part of why I lift up these different moments is not because I have the answers for how to do them—anybody listening is going to have the way that they might want to think about it in their context—but it's to remember to attend to and intentionally design, "Okay, how am I going to get real-time feedback?" You could create a role of somebody who's just asking, tapping people on the shoulder quietly during the thing, and being like, "How is this going for you? Do you think we need a break?" I don't know if that's an answer in your context, but we can think, then—and I don't want to jump ahead—but that gets us to the notion of levers; it's expanding our creativity. But, first, in order to do that, we really want to think and break down our experience into some key moments so that we're able to pay attention, really zoom in, and focus on moments that we know matter, particularly for belonging.

Jeff Cobb: [00:22:33] I should say that you go through all of these moments in the book, lay them out in detail, discuss them. I very much recommend that folks read the book. You mentioned also the illustrations and the murals that take people through this, which are also wonderful. A strong recommendation for folks to actually dive into this material and read it in detail. Could you touch on the concept of diverging and exiting and accounting for that moment? Because I don't think that gets accounted for a lot of the time.

Susie Wise: [00:22:59] Thank you so much for bringing it up. I was about to butt back in and be like, "Okay, so we talked about the invitation, entering, participating, contributing, even flowing, dissenting, and then this notion of diverging and exiting." I raise it in the book exactly for the reason that you said—it doesn't get enough attention. Often, if we're starting to work on belonging, particularly if we're trying to build a more diverse and inclusive body of folks coming together and building a more inclusive community, we naturally go towards the invitation and, potentially, the entering, but that's not good enough. And, in real life, particularly in the adult learning context, whether it's a conference or a longer-format course of some kind, how do I still get to belong if I have to step out or if I decide that this isn't my path? It's helpful remembering, and I think it's a nudge to remember, that this is not a zero-sum game.

Susie Wise: [00:24:00] We always, particularly as adults, are existing in multiple contexts. We have multiple identities, and those are going to push and pull on how we're able to participate. So attending to how can we step out, how can we come back, what happens when we're "graduating," those are also moments to think about belonging. How do you graduate and then

This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode361.

page 8 of 14

become part of an alumni community, for instance? We have some of those models. Obviously, we have them in the universities. But I think they're really interesting to think about, what they could be like in other kinds of organizations and in other kinds of learning flows, for instance. Especially as you started us off thinking about lifelong learning. That's got to be all about being able to loop back in. Know that you still belong. You can tap back in. You can refresh. What if we thought of it as not leaving but refreshing, that you're refreshing by going to do something else, and now you're back, and you're fresh?

Jeff Cobb: [00:24:59] The very point that I wanted to make. Because people are just flowing in and out of these experiences in time. It might be a conference or a class, but then, in between that, they're going to, somehow or another, be interacting, most likely, with other people from your organization and with peers. How can you account for that in how you think about designing and learning? Community, of course, is a big thing with our audience and the idea of learning communities. People are always dipping in and out of communities in different ways, and really being able to account for that is essential if you want to be successful at it.

Susie Wise: [00:25:33] Yes. And accounting for it is a part of it. And then I think that remembering that accounting, if you know you want to be accounting for it, that means you're noticing that you need to design, that you want to be creative around how do you do it? I even share a story in the book of diverging and exiting from one of my mentors, who always opened up anything to say, "There are going to be some comings and goings. What are they? Can we just get those out?" I think that accounting for is a piece, but it's also our nudge to creatively design for what we know is going to happen.

Jeff Cobb: [00:26:13] Right. I want to turn to that before we wrap up today. I'll just note that you've articulated these moments. I would encourage anybody listening to think about those moments in relationship to the types of experiences that your organization offers. How do they apply? Can you identify those moments within your learning experiences? And, as you noted, Susie, these aren't from on high. You may have your own unique and particular moments to the types of experiences you're delivering. But identify those, account for them, and then you can turn to designing for them. So often a lot of this is just left to chance. You hope people are going to feel that sense of belonging. It's all going to work out. And a lot of times it does. But we can be much more intentional. We can be much more conscious. We can design for belonging. Can you talk about some of the tools and levers [lee-vers] that we have available to us to do that?

This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode361.

page 9 of 14

Susie Wise: [00:27:14] Yes. We can go lever [lee-ver]. We can go lever [le-ver]. I'm actually a lever [le-ver] person, but I think there are a lot more lever lee-ver] people than there are lever [le-ver].

Jeff Cobb: [00:27:19] All right. You say lever [lee-ver], I say lever [le-ver]. We'll…

Susie Wise: [00:27:22] Exactly. The idea here is yes. When you know, wow, there's a moment that you want to work on, and it makes me think I do also want to mention there are more moments, and, in particular, another moment to think about is the moment of repair. That's, again, about knowing that there are going to be mistakes. We are, after all, humans that we are designing for. We are not perfect. We will not be. I don't know what our role is going to be in some perfect AI world. But I imagine that, for now anyway, we're going to have to even do repair around the things that AI creates. In any event, repair is a really important moment, and that can be micro—thinking about how do we repair for microaggressions or experiences—to bigger changes that we need to make based on, perhaps, feedback. So repair is another moment.

Susie Wise: [00:28:14] As we're entering into this space of deciding, "Okay, this is a moment I need to design for," perhaps I'm thinking about contributing, repair, or diverging and exiting, that we were talking about, we want to open up these levers, [which] are the toolkit of design. And by that, I mean that we're just reminding ourselves (1) of our creativity and (2) that everything in our environments is, in fact, designed, and it can be consciously and intentionally designed or redesigned. We can think about space, role, ritual, time, groupings, schedules, even food, gear, and clothing. These are all things that we consciously design. And you can go through even a checklist. If you're imagining you're building a conference, of course, you're thinking about all those things, but are you thinking about them with the lens of belonging? That's what matters, that intersection. How can the space contribute to a sense of building community? For instance, could you use visual storytelling tools, banners, or screen-based things where you're actually hearing the stories of participants live in your space? How do you make a space that's light-filled and cozy so that people can have small groups and you can flex to when a large group comes together so that you can host in a space the kinds of conversations that you want people to be able to have?

Susie Wise: [00:29:55] We as humans are really attuned to what space is offering us, and we, for whatever reason, as learning designers, don't necessarily go as far as we could, I think, with really thinking about space as a lever of design. Role and ritual are my other two top levers to think about, in part because there are things that we get really used to. "Well, we always do it that way." Or "There's always been this counselor." "There's always been this teacher." But, in

This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode361.

page 10 of 14

fact, we might want to think about is there a new role? Is there a matchmaker that's there at the threshold and is helping people with different experiences get to know each other, is designing ways for people to have small group conversations? What is that matchmaker role in it? Not like a romantic matchmaker, meaning just thinking about all the different kinds of roles. I think, in the adult learning space, we're pretty good at knowing that there are coaches and knowing that people see therapists. There are some roles that we know might be adjacent to our learning spaces that we could bring in in more interesting ways. But I just think we can open up our creativity as we're noticing what kind of a moment we want to design for and what kind of a role could actually be supportive of it.

Jeff Cobb: [00:31:19] I think that notion around rituals is so interesting too, which you're maybe about to talk about more, because I think, a lot of times, we don't identify the ways that we tend to do things as rituals, and rituals are just so powerful. You talk about these as levers. It's a very powerful lever.

Susie Wise: [00:31:37] Yes, ritual. That is the other thing to think about. And those could be entry rituals. They can be feedback-sharing rituals. They can be rituals for how do you depart? How do you communicate? We can create, in fact, rituals around everything that we need to build our belonging. And the key with building a ritual is really just thinking beginning, middle, and end. How do we come into it and know what we want to focus on? How do we, then, sit in whatever the experience is? That might be sharing in some way. That might be bringing in new creativity tools. And, then, how do we close it? How do we decide what we carry forth into the next bit of our work together? And rituals can be really interesting intersections with space, also with time. These are places where we can flex our muscles of creativity.

Jeff Cobb: [00:32:32] As with the moments, we're only scratching the surface here, but I'll say, about your work and about the book specifically, you provide this wealth of material for people to work with. You have this idea of the moments—looking at those moments, determining which ones really fit your situation, and which ones you want to add. And then, looking at these—I'm not sure if I'm saying levers [le-vers] or levers [lee-vers] now; I've sort of lost which one I prefer—but you have these design tools to then work with those moments. It's a very practical set of material to work with from the book. I'd love to ask—you give a lot of individual exercises in the book, and those are fantastic—if you're working with the book or with these ideas as a team at a learning business (you're a business that designs events, experiences, and communities), how would you go about using the book as a team to really help you move the dial on increasing belonging in your learning experiences?

This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode361.

page 11 of 14

Susie Wise: [00:33:31] Absolutely. I think it may be that the exercises come across as individual exercises because books are pitched towards an individual. I actually use every single exercise in it as a tool in the context of groups working together, so I feel really comfortable with that. I like to get groups to, as I mentioned, do the emotional journey map or the mapping of places of belonging. Recently, I heard somebody did it with a team. They just asked the question, "In our whole building"—this is like a corporate campus—"In all of our space, what are your spaces of belonging?" And people just mapped places that they felt. They actually noticed some interesting patterns of junior colleagues not being comfortable in the whiteboard spaces that they had. So that's a super specific example.

Susie Wise: [00:34:26] But that's the idea of, when we use some of the tools that are to understand when and where different people are feeling belonging or not, that gives us, then, this really interesting design data to work with. Those are all tools that I think are really easy to use with groups. You can have a meeting of everybody. You could get everybody from your conference, for instance, to take a five-minute experience and map something or do that emotional journey map. So those tools can be used with groups. And then you need a design team who wants to look at that and be like, "Oh, wow. Okay. It feels like that moment of entry is not working in this learning experience. Let's dig in on that." And where you go then is framing up a design challenge with a "How might we?"

Susie Wise: [00:35:20] That's one of the tools that's in there, but groups can do that. You can do it individually and bring it to a team and then look across how do people generate those "How might we?"s. And that's where the simple version of that is just, "How might we support more belonging for (blank) new participants at our conference by focusing on (a moment)?" The moment of entry using a design lever, perhaps role or ritual. I don't know if that's going to make sense in audio, the way that I laid it out there, but you want to get to that kind of a question, and you'll notice what we have in there is the who—who are we worried about, concerned about, interested in designing for, supporting more belonging—and what's the moment we want to focus on and what's a lever or two that we might want to brainstorm with? We didn't come up with a solution in creating that. What we did was create a launch pad for a team to brainstorm and generate ideas for how you could do that in your next conference. How do you support those new participants with a role or ritual at their entry to the conference or the experience? That is, in a nutshell, the design process, and it's a great way to work in a collaborative team. In fact, it's best done in a collaborative team as opposed to just on your own.

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page 12 of 14

Jeff Cobb: [00:36:45] Well, thanks for that. I think it is so powerful to go through those kinds of exercises together and to have a discussion around all of these concepts together. I'll give the plug, as I try to do in these podcast episodes, that having everybody listen to this podcast episode and have it as a background, share it together, and bring in to the room can be very powerful as a way to get the group involved. Now, before we wrap up, I'd like to do what I usually like to do with guests on Leading Learning. Since we are a show about learning and, specifically, about lifelong learning, it'd be great to get a sense of how you approach your own lifelong learning, and, given the nature of our conversation too, if you have anything to share around places or spaces where you feel like that deep sense of belonging enhances your ability to learn.

Susie Wise: [00:37:31] Yes, thank you. Thank you for that question. In my approach to learning, I try to bring a design lens to it, and, for me, that is seeking out analogous contexts, different kinds of places to immerse myself in. Sometimes those are places where I feel like I belong, and sometimes those are places where I don't necessarily. For instance, I recently went to a cycling class—those group exercise classes where they play loud music. And I'm an energetic person, but there's a very energetic leader of the class. And the lights do things, and it's very intense. It's not really a place that I feel super comfortable. But, for me, going to a place like that was really helpful for my learning because then I could see, in bold relief, all the moves that they are making to create that experience.

Susie Wise: [00:38:39] And it, then, gave me ideas. There was a whole entry ritual, in fact, there, where you had to get special shoes, and you had to clamp them in. Anyway, there were ways in which I felt them bringing me in, and there were ways in which I felt like I was just left to my own devices and felt quite uncomfortable. But getting to immerse and experience that and then step out and reflect on it is really powerful. Because I think one of the things that we forget, if we're designing learning experiences, is to go have other experiences so we can reflect on how they were built. So that, I think, is really key to me. I try and put myself in a lot of weird, different, uncomfortable spaces so that I can see how they were built, in bold relief.

Jeff Cobb: [00:39:28] Thanks for sharing that because I think it is such an important point, too, that as much as we want belonging and want help to cultivate belonging, there are also many times when each of us, as individuals, has to get uncomfortable. We have to maybe be someplace where we don't fully belong in order to push ourselves forward and to learn in the way that we would like to learn. I think the key is that you want to be prepared for that. You want to be intentional and conscious about it. You don't want to have it thrust on you.

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page 13 of 14

Susie Wise: [00:39:54] Yes, it's a design exercise, and that's what I'm seeking, a design exercise. And the other part of the question you asked is, "Where is a place of belonging that I have?" Most of my places of belonging in my life are very physical places. But I'll say that, professionally, right now, my place of belonging is with a design collective that I've been working with, and they're called Design for Emergence. It's a distributed group of folks, and we support each other to, in fact, push ourselves to do things like what I just described, to go have authentic learning experiences that are a little bit uncomfortable and that are really in our ZPD, our zone of proximal development, that are a little bit outside, so that we can reflect together on what we're learning there.

Celisa Steele: [00:40:48] Dr. Susie Wise is a learning experience designer and author of the book *Design for Belonging: How to Build Inclusion and Collaboration in Your Communities*.

Jeff Cobb: [00:40:57] In the show notes for this episode at leadinglearning.com/episode361, you'll find a couple of links where you can learn more about Susie's work and connect with her. And we do also highly recommend checking out her book.

Celisa Steele: [00:41:11] Jeff and I would be grateful if you would rate the Leading Learning Podcast on Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen, especially if you find the show valuable. Your ratings and reviews help us show up when people search for content on leading a learning business.

Jeff Cobb: [00:41:24] And please spread the word about Leading Learning, whether in a one-on-one conversation with a colleague or a personal note or on social media. In the show notes at leadinglearning.com/episode361, you'll find links to connect with us on Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

Celisa Steele: [00:41:41] Thanks for listening, and see you next time on the Leading Learning Podcast.

[music for this episode by DanoSongs, www.danosongs.com]

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page 14 of 14