



Non-boring Learning

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This book is a work of nonfiction. While based on real-life experiences and professional practice, some names and details may have been changed to protect privacy.

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Something personal

It's 4:30 AM, and the baby is awake-he's going through the 7-month sleep regression. After we managed to put him back to sleep, I found myself unable to do the same.

So, I decided to work on my book, this book that you're currently holding! The idea of writing this book started years ago. My husband kept nudging me to do it, and I kept thinking, I'll write it when I have time. Guess what? I never have time.

Turns out, waiting for the right moment wasn't working. So, I changed my approach. Instead of forcing myself to write, I decided to do it when I felt **inspired**, when I was excited about it - when I was in the flow.

I started writing in April 2024. I was pregnant, full of ideas, and the words just poured out. That's also when Zsofia Gaudi joined as the book's scientific editor - a true adult educator! By the end of June, 90% of the book was done.

Then came July. I only needed a couple more days to finish it. On a Wednesday morning, I had a meeting with Zsofi, but for some reason, I just didn't feel like doing it (which is very unlike me!). I asked to reschedule-because remember, I promised myself I wouldn't force things.

Later that day my little boy, Elias decided it was the perfect time to meet the world - a little earlier than expected! From that moment, my attention and love went to him, and the book took a backseat.

We picked it up a couple of months later and that was actually very helpful because the time that had passed gave us perspective and helped us to improve the book further and in the summer of 2025 it was ready!

This book is written with a lot of love for learning and development. I hope it brings you inspiration, tickles your **creativity** and gives you a boost of encouragement to move away from boring learning.

My Story

I was in a room with 34 people for three straight hours - half are on their phones, and the rest are barely staying awake. We had all paid a good amount of money to learn coaching skills, but instead of doing that, we were stuck listening to the head trainer. Yes, he was brilliant, but no one - no matter how charismatic-can keep a group engaged for that long.

At the time, I was fresh out of university, having just completed a master's in Adult Education. I remember thinking, "This is definitely not how learning should happen." If a room full of motivated learners can check out so quickly, something is clearly broken.

Dull training has always been challenging, but it becomes an even bigger problem within organizations, where people often feel they have no choice but to attend. Motivation can't be taken for granted in this environment.

Yet organizations all over the world still spend huge amounts of time and money on Learning & Development: onboarding new employees, upskilling executives, developing new leaders, you name it. When people tune out, these initiatives fail. Not only are time and resources wasted, but the participants stay underprepared for their roles, and they won't feel connected to each other or the organization and ultimately drives good people away.

When people tune out, learning initiatives fail.

I've seen this play out countless times as a learning consultant called in to improve training programs. I've watched emerging leaders enter a company only to receive theoretical leadership lessons instead of practical guidance on how to lead within their specific context. They would complain about not knowing how to handle real-life situations, become frustrated, snap at their teams, and sometimes quit early on.

I've also seen new employees swamped by hours of onboarding lectures on the company's values and heavy compliance training. Even when they start out motivated, it's impossible to retain that much information all at once, so before long, they mentally check out. What is worse is that a couple of days after the onboarding, the new employee is standing in front of a massive piece of equipment - no clue how it works. wide-eyed like a kid trying VR for the first time.

This isn't the typical "here's your desk, and the Wi-Fi password" scenario. I am talking pharma, nuclear, and high-stakes manufacturing where these underprepared hires can make costly compliance mistakes that could have been prevented with effective training.

Boring training is expensive.

Effective learning is when people are engaged, they exchange ideas, they bond, they are inspired to change their behaviour, they embody the values of your organisation and work on real challenges. When this happens, they have a better sense of their own role, they are more connected with each other and connect deeper with your organisation.

This is possible with non-boring learning. I have experienced it first hand and I have measured the impact of it. For example, while creating a non-boring onboarding program for a global organisation, after the first cohorts of the program, we saw a remarkable shift in how new employees connected with the company. On average, the percentage of participants who felt **proud** to work at the organization, understood the company's values, and recognized their personal impact on customers jumped from 29% to 88%¹.

Such numbers made me proud about what non-boring learning can do, the **impact** that it brings on the table. It's not only that people feel happy when they join a workshop - it goes further - to the level of depth of learning, to the impact on the organisational level, to the benefits on the organisation's clients.

The reasons above are why I'm writing the book, I want to spread the word. I want to share real cases and stories from my clients who are mostly global organisations in various industries. You will get the context, the real business challenges and how they were addressed with non-boring learning initiatives.

¹ According to the post-training impact analysis we contacted 6 cohorts of new hires who participated in the onboarding program. We conducted a post-training impact analysis on six cohorts of new hires who participated in the onboarding program. The analysis included a quantitative self-evaluation questionnaire completed by the participants, as well as qualitative research involving interviews with their supervisors. The quantitative results were cross-checked against the qualitative findings to ensure consistency and accuracy. Finally, the outcomes were compared with those of previous cohorts who had not participated in the onboarding program, allowing us to assess the program's added value.

Effective learning is when people are engaged, they exchange ideas, they bond, they are inspired to change their behaviour, **they embody the values of your organisation and work on real challenges.**

For Whom & Purpose of This Book

You're here because you've probably spotted some of those energy-draining, enthusiasm-killing elements in learning, and you're looking for fresh ideas to shake things up in your organization and create lasting impact.

This book is for you if you are an **L&D leader** or a manager who wants to make your function more strategic and explore business challenges from a big variety of industries and how they were dealt with non-boring learning. I will walk you through real-world best practices that have helped other organizations thrive.

It's also for you if you are a **designer**, trainer, facilitator or Subject Matter Expert (SME) who cares deeply about people, wants to get out of the monotony of recurring corporate sessions. Moreover, get a fresh perspective on how to design and deliver more engaging workshops and development programs.

In these pages, I'll share my **experiences** working with multinational organizations such as Netflix, H&M, Johnson & Johnson, Teva Pharmaceuticals, Nippon Express, and Trivium Packaging - helping their people to create non-boring training! So new hires ramp up fast, leaders grow, early talent sticks around, and compliance mistakes don't happen.

Zsofi is the editor of this book with expertise in adult education and she is a real nerd! She brings in the science of **adult learning** backing up the non-boring approach with research. With theory-bites her aim is to equip you with tools, techniques and knowledge to help you understand why things work or why they don't. This process can support you and your organisation to be more strategic when planning your learning initiatives: use of movement, tactile tools, mindfulness or coaching during the sessions. In my work, I've rediscovered the joy of learning, and I wish the same for everyone involved in the process: participants, trainers, L&D teams, and management alike.

But what's actually killing engagement?

After 11 years of working with groups, consulting organisations and training trainers, facilitators, Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and teachers, I discovered that there are 6 factors that kill engagement.

Factor 1: Vague requests that hide the real problem

Too many workshops fall flat because they're built on vague requests- "make our leaders more confident" or "help our team communicate better". The problem? These requests sound valid but hide the real issues beneath. When we skip the step of clarifying the actual challenge, we risk designing sessions that are misaligned, superficial, or just plain boring.

What happens then? Learners politely show up, maybe even enjoy themselves, but nothing changes. They go back to their work and fall right back into old habits. Engagement stays surface-level. And all your beautifully designed activities? They don't land, because they're not rooted in what really matters to the people in the room.

If you know exactly what's holding your learners back, you've uncovered the real pain points, then you can translate them into desired behaviors, and build a session that starts with relevance. From the first moment, participants feel seen. They're curious, alert, and ready to dive in. Your workshop doesn't just feel different - it makes a difference.

This is exactly what **Chapter 1: Where Engagement Begins** helps you do. It introduces the Inconvenient Situation Model to help you go from abstract requests to sharp, behavioral objectives. It also shows you how to ditch the traditional logical flow and instead start where it matters most to your learners. If you want to design sessions that are non-boring and high-impact, this is the place to start.

Factor 2: Trying to change behavior only from the neck up

Most learning programs rely heavily on content, slides, and talk - expecting people to shift deeply ingrained behaviors just by thinking differently. However, behavior doesn't live in the head alone. It also lives in the body. Without engaging the body in the learning process, we keep seeing the same frustrating pattern: learners nod along during training and go right back to their old habits the next day.

Imagine a different kind of learning - one that gets people moving, reflecting, and actually feeling the shift. Where leaders don't just hear about coaching or resilience, they experience the difference with their bodies. A kind of learning that brings insight, self-awareness, connection, and even joy into the room.

That's what Embodied Learning makes possible. It breaks through intellectual resistance, builds behavioural awareness, boosts motivation, and creates powerful team cohesion. **Chapter 2** introduces this approach and shows how to use the body as a learning tool to drive deep, lasting change - especially for those "hard-to-teach" capabilities like coaching, resilience, leadership, and feedback. If you want people to live the change, not just understand it, start here.

Factor 3: Onboarding that overwhelms but doesn't connect

Many onboarding programs are packed with content but light on connection. They rely on presentations, compliance checklists, and speeches from senior leaders - hoping that a dinner or gift box will make it all memorable. Yet, these formats often leave new employees passive, uninspired, and disconnected from the culture they're supposed to join. The consequence? Missed learning, weak team bonds, and in some cases, early attrition that costs the business dearly.

Now imagine onboarding that feels like a meaningful welcome - where people laugh, move, reflect, and truly connect. Where compliance becomes playful, values are not just stated but embodied, and even early talent walks away feeling ready to lead. That's the power of non-boring onboarding. In **Chapter 3**, you'll discover practical ways to infuse your program with energy, relevance, and purpose - using embodied learning, coaching mindsets, and creative formats that turn information into impact.

Factor 4: Spoon-feeding learners instead of coaching them

Oftentimes we feel the pressure to deliver value by giving answers, filling silence, and making sure everything runs smoothly. This way, when we work harder than our learners, we unintentionally train them to stay passive, dependent, and disengaged. They come to expect being spoon-fed, struggle to take ownership of their learning, and often fail to transfer what they've learned into real-world application. We end up tired, the participants stay uninvolved, and the results are disappointing.

How can we change that? How can we create learning spaces where participants are the ones doing the “heavy lifting” - reflecting, exploring, applying, and discovering insights for themselves? The facilitator steps back into the role of a coach: creating space, asking powerful questions, and guiding learning rather than delivering it. In **Chapter 4**, you’ll explore how coaching principles, like the GROW model and the “lazy coach” mindset, can offer a new perspective in your facilitation from content delivery into a co-created learning journey.

Factor 5: Letting your triggers run the session

Let’s be honest - sooner or later, each of us has faced a “difficult” participant. Maybe they dominate, challenge, withdraw, or disengage. The real problem? We’re often unprepared - not just technically, but emotionally and physically. We take things personally, fall into defensive patterns, or freeze entirely. When we react from stress or fear, we lose the room. Instead of creating a psychologically safe learning space, we accidentally reinforce power struggles, awkward silence, or a group that tunes out.

What if you could see disruptive behaviour not as a threat, but as a signal - and respond with confidence and calmness? **Chapter 5** is your toolkit for exactly that. It blends theory, neurobiology, and embodied techniques to help you handle resistance and tension without losing yourself (or your group). You’ll learn how to recognise the dynamics, understand which of the 7 types of difficult participants triggers you and apply my “magic formula” to stay grounded.

Factor 6: Speaking one message, embodying another

You can have the perfect workshop plan, strong content, and great activities - but if **your embodied presence** doesn’t land, the whole room feels it. The problem is, most facilitators are unprepared for the nonverbal impact they have. From a slouched posture to a flat tone of voice, these subtle signals send loud messages: “I’m not confident,” “I’m not engaged,” or “I don’t really want to be here.” We often overlook our physical presence, but participants pick up on it instantly - long before we say a word. Showing up with low energy or unclear signals costs us connection, credibility, and trust.

Now think stepping into a session grounded, warm, and purposeful - open posture, confident voice, contagious energy. Learners tune in, stay with you,