



## Preface

When teachers focus on building learning power in their classrooms, the impact on learners can be startling. I've seen this happen in schools across the UK when teachers have begun to think creatively about the ways in which they can help young people become better learners.

We all know that if you put a deep, practical understanding of learning at the heart of what goes on in classrooms, it will have wide-ranging impact on all young people.

This book is the first in a series of practical handbooks stemming from my earlier book, *Building Learning Power*. It is designed to encourage you to think differently about the ways in which you

work with students, and to join other teachers who have changed their focus from the narrow fields of attainment and behaviour to the broader horizons of lifelong learning.

As you journey through this book you will build your own capacity to be a learning powered individual and to generate those '101' approaches that are going to work in your classroom. This approach has been tried and tested through the extensive development work I have been doing with many teachers over the last ten years.

You know that putting learning at the heart of what you do makes sense. We know that Building Learning Power works.

**Professor Guy Claxton**

Programme Consultant for  
*Building Learning Power*





## Introduction

This handbook is written for classroom teachers who have been introduced to the idea of learning power, and who are interested in using it in practice. Ideally, they will have read Guy Claxton's *Building Learning Power*, key concepts of which are summarised very briefly on pages 4 to 7 of this handbook.

You will not find a list of detailed tricks and tips; this is not an instruction manual. The process of building learning power is far too dynamic for that. We are inviting you to make a step change in what you are trying to effect in the classroom. There *are* lists, and classroom examples, and suggestions, but most of these aim to encourage you to expand your own thinking about how you can help young people to become better learners.

Although there are no shortcuts, there are things you can do immediately that will develop learning dispositions and make teaching more rewarding. Successfully fostering the habits needed for lifelong learning takes a little longer!

*A tricky choice.* Learning power works for all ages, and this handbook applies equally to primary and secondary classrooms. However, where primary school teachers

tend to refer to their young learners as pupils, secondary school teachers prefer the term students: whichever word an author picks, she risks offending half of her potential readers. In this handbook we have plumped for 'students': the learning power model treats young people as our active co-participants in the processes of learning, and – whatever the reality in the classroom – the connotations of 'student' perhaps carry more of this active sense than those of the word 'pupil'.

This last point contains the vital aspect of learning power that takes it forward from earlier approaches to learning to learn. Learning power engages your students consciously with the ideas and processes of their own learning, in the knowledge that learning itself is learnable.

We are grateful to Dr Bill Lucas for his helpful comments on an earlier draft. Our thanks go, too, to Dean Purnell for his work on the design and DTP; and to the students and staff of St Michael on the Mount Primary School, Bedminster Down School and Cotham School in Bristol who appear in the photographs in this book.

## The Authors

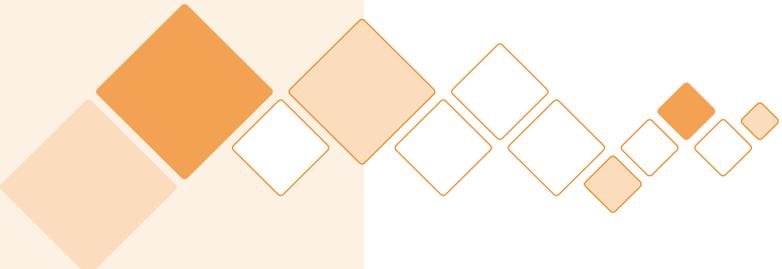
Maryl Chambers and Graham Powell have spearheaded the development of TLO Limited's Building Learning Power programme, helping to bring Guy Claxton's ground-breaking work to schools and teachers.

Maryl is one of the founders of TLO, where she has applied her wide experience of designing learning-focused training to creating and developing the innovative programmes for which the company is renowned. She is co-author of many of TLO's publications.

Graham has been headteacher of a large comprehensive school, and a Senior Adviser and Inspector with Gloucestershire LEA. Since becoming a Principal Consultant with TLO in September 2000, he has specialised in applying

innovative coaching methods in professional development. He is co-author of several of TLO's handbooks, including the very successful *Pathways to Coaching*.

Guy Claxton is an internationally acclaimed writer, consultant, lecturer and academic, specialising in creativity, education and the mind. He is Visiting Professor of Learning Science at the University of Bristol's Graduate School of Education, and a Fellow of the British Psychological Society. He has written extensively on subjects from creative thinking to Buddhism, by way of the uses and value of uncertainty in learning, and what it is that makes people effective lifelong learners.



## Ideas for using this handbook

### *Review the basics of learning power by reading and engaging with:*

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|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| What is learning power?           | Pages 4–5 |
| How teachers build learning power | Pages 6–7 |

### *Stimulate your curiosity about learning power by interacting with:*

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| Get curious about your own learning power       | Pages 8–9   |
| Get curious about your students' learning power | Pages 10–11 |
| Get curious about boosting your teaching        | Pages 12–13 |

### *Prepare to introduce learning power into your classroom by mulling over:*

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|---|---------|
| Make a start: Small changes, big levers | Page 14 |
| Make a start: Explaining                | Page 15 |
| Make a start: Orchestrating             | Page 16 |
| Make a start: Commentating              | Page 17 |
| Make a start: Modelling                 | Page 18 |
| Make a start: The four Rs framework     | Page 19 |

### *Enhance your practice by referring to:*

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|--|-------------|
| Refine what you do: Watching yourself at work    | Pages 20–21 |
| Refine what you do: Collecting student responses | Pages 22–23 |

### *Plan your progress by engaging with:*

- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| Take things further: Sharpening reactions     | Pages 24–25 |
| Take things further: Keep track of your ideas | Pages 26–27 |
| Take things further: What next?               | Page 28     |





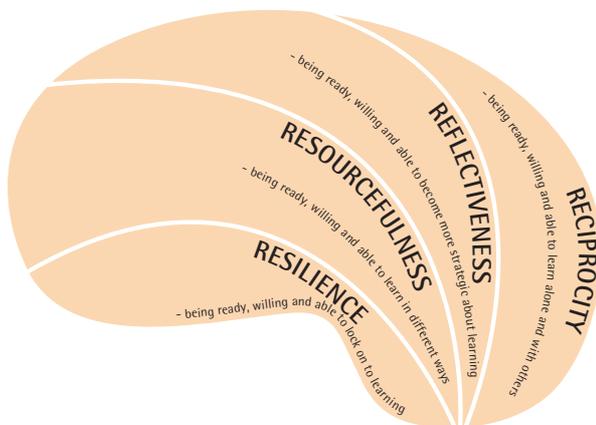
# What is learning power?

## An approach to learning to learn

Lifelong learning is our birthright. We can continually develop our portable capacity to learn in new and challenging circumstances throughout our lives.

In the developing field of learning to learn, research suggests that there are several broad dispositions that we need to develop in order to become successful lifelong learners.

Guy Claxton, in his book *Building Learning Power*, suggests that there are four key *learning dispositions* – Resilience, Resourcefulness, Reflectiveness and Reciprocity, the new four Rs of learning. These dispositions are inherent in us all. But they are not fixed at birth, or when we leave school: they can be developed by everyone regardless of 'ability', social background, or age. There are no limits to extending our learning power.



We can think of the dispositions as being like groups of 'learning muscles'. Just as we can build our physical muscles by the right kinds of exercise, so we can exercise our learning muscles to develop their strength and stamina. Developing the dispositions that make for success as a lifelong learner equates to achieving a good level of all-round learning fitness.

Each of the dispositions – the four Rs – is made up of a number of learning behaviours, which we call *learning capacities*. These are summarised on the page opposite. Because the learning capacities are specific in nature, they can be individually trained, nurtured and exercised.

### Resilience

is being ready, willing and able to lock onto learning – knowing how to work through difficulties when the pressure mounts or the going gets tough.

Your resilience is made up of . . .

### Resourcefulness

is being ready, willing and able to learn in different ways – using both internal and external resources effectively, calling on different ways of learning as appropriate.

Your resourcefulness is made up of . . .

### Reflectiveness

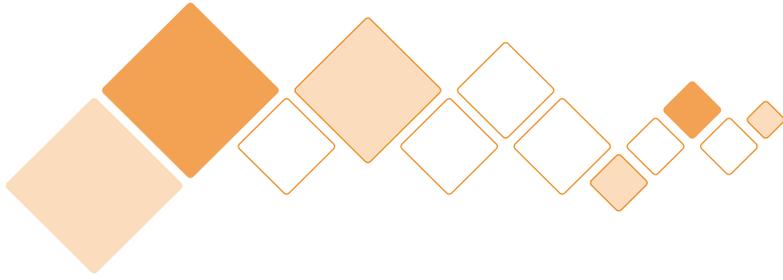
is being ready, willing and able to become more strategic about learning – taking a longer-term view by planning, taking stock, and drawing out your experiences as a learner to get the best out of yourself.

Your reflectiveness is made up of . . .

### Reciprocity

in learning is being ready, willing and able to learn alone or with other people – using a sense of independent judgement together with skills in communication and empathy.

Your reciprocity is made up of . . .



### Absorption

Being able to lose yourself in learning – becoming absorbed in what you are doing; rapt and attentive, in a state of 'flow'.

### Managing distractions

Recognising and reducing distractions; knowing when to walk away and refresh yourself. Creating your own best environment for learning.

### Noticing

Perceiving subtle nuances, patterns and details in experience.

### Perseverance

Keeping going in the face of difficulties, channelling the energy of frustration productively. Knowing what a slow and uncertain process learning often is.

### Questioning

Asking questions of yourself and others. Being curious and playful with ideas – delving beneath the surface of things.

### Making links

Seeing connections between disparate events and experiences – building patterns – weaving a web of understanding.

### Imagining

Using your imagination and intuition to put yourself through new experiences or to explore possibilities. Wondering 'what if...?'

### Reasoning

Calling up your logical and rational skills to work things out methodically and rigorously; constructing good arguments, and spotting the flaws in others.

### Capitalising

Drawing on the full range of resources from the wider world – other people, books, the Internet, past experience, future opportunities ...

### Planning

Thinking about where you are going, the action you are going to take, the time and resources you will need, and the obstacles you may encounter.

### Revising

Being flexible, changing your plans in the light of different circumstances, monitoring and reviewing how things are going and seeing new opportunities.

### Distilling

Looking at what is being learned – pulling out the essential features – carrying them forward to aid further learning; being your own learning coach.

### Meta-learning

Knowing yourself as a learner – how you learn best; how to talk about the learning process.

### Interdependence

Knowing when it's appropriate to learn on your own or with others, and being able to stand your ground in debate.

### Collaboration

Knowing how to manage yourself in the give and take of a collaborative venture, respecting and recognising other view points; adding to and drawing from the strength of teams.

### Empathy & listening

Contributing to others' experiences by listening to them to understand what they are really saying, and putting yourself in their shoes.

### Imitation

Constructively adopting methods, habits or values from other people whom you observe.