

SEBASTIAN BURCH

Trainer



Country: Spain

Contact information: www.gaiaysofia.com

Education: MSc PG Dip Holistic Science

Fields/topics you work in: Nature Based Learning, Holistic farming & communication

Experience as a trainer: 7 years facilitating non formal learning experience with Gaia y Sofia S.L.L, Posada del Valle, Schumacher College, Biodiversa, YEE and others. Some of the training courses have been “Soil For Life”, “Green Urban Cycles”, “Connecting to Nature”, “Green Entrepreneurs”, “Backpack Journalism for Youth Eco-innovation”, “3 Senses”, “Ruralize Yourself”, “The way of Food”, “Earth Pilgrims”

WHY DID YOU BECOME A TRAINER?

I guess it has to do with how much I value non formal education, because I enjoy challenges and really appreciate the opportunity to be creative with others around topics that are close to my heart.

I feel at home with the role of “facilitation”, working with complex processes, assisting personal and group learning experiences and flowing with eventualities.

Mainly, I guess it was because I had the opportunity to explore the role, great facilitators inspired me and slowly shared with me different responsibilities. I felt the confidence in myself and others grow, so I guess I eventually took on a “big step” and before I knew it I was seen by others as a trainer.

I am really passionate about changing education and our relation to the other-than human world and these two aspects combine very well in the world of non formal education.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART ABOUT BEING A TRAINER?

Actually, I can think of three different moments I really enjoy in a training experience.

First, at the beginning, when preparing for a training activity, before anything has even started, I always let my imagination go wild... and this is how it starts for me... with just a few basic variables it feels like anything can happen, so - as a facilitator - I have to set clear and sensible “boundaries” that will allow things to flow in a safe and constructive manner.

Then secondly, when it's all unfolding, and a planned activity is taking place... the unexpected starts to come into being and all the things that I could never have imagined begin to happen and become real - this part is quite amazing - to watch how participants exchange personal experiences in a shared place and time is a real privilege.

Finally, when it seems as if it was all over. Sometimes it can even be years after a training experience, maybe as I am walking along a river, I suddenly remember something that must have been hidden away in -the water of my unconscious- and a story that joins many dots, starts to make sense. I learn something new, something deep. This is also a pretty special feeling.

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AN ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY TRAINER?

Yes I do, very much so! Even if I still have a long way to learn.

Sustainability and environmental awareness are key aspects I continuously work with as a trainer. How? Well, by taking learning “outside the box”, i.e.

1. by going outdoors, moving into wilder spaces, places that share stories of other than human;
2. by co-creating low impact and self-sufficient living communities;
3. and finally but not least: by animating the world around me, through ritual, science and stories, reducing my need of digital technology, just by valuing, caring and using the simplest but most meaningful things around me.

There is a community tool sometimes called “care groups” that entails creating a set of alternating daily work-groups dedicated to taking care of common spaces and needs. My favourite are gardening, harvesting, gathering and cooking work-groups; I find there is so much to learn and share around food and its huge role in the world.

The latest workshop I have held is a very special workshop on a topic that really excites me, it was called “The Secrets of Plants” and it's about introducing a “way of being” with plants that is conducive to significant learning, by experiencing the reciprocity of awareness between plants and

humans, i.e. by treating trees as mindful observers and great teachers.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF BEING A TRAINER?

Personally, I think there are many challenges when being a trainer. Mainly because of the huge possibility of situations and tasks that test my ability to hold a safe space and lead an authentic group process in the most inclusive way possible.

Sometimes, getting ready for an activity can prove quite challenging, if I get “stuck” with some preoccupation or fear, I can lose time and spend a lot of unnecessary energy on really small issues... whilst other times big “problems” can emerge during an activity and therefore become new “pressing topics” that swipe initial intended themes. In these moments, I find letting go and embracing the unintended to be quite challenging.

Personally, I find another recurring test on being a good trainer, to attentively listen to feedback (a lot of times), sometimes I don't know what to do. It can be a little despairing, but when I find my personal magic formula and I do it constructively, I can see how it builds up and enriches my personality and work.



HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR FACILITATING A TRAINING COURSE?

I think that preparing for facilitation is a -sense making- process. What I mean by this, is that you don't stop preparing, until things start to make sense. It's like a state of mind, a predisposition or an attitude, something that is impossible to measure, but you can feel it, when you have achieved it.

There are three senses that I like to use to guide me. My sense of the "place" I will be at, the "community" I will be with and finally but not last, the "Self" I want to bring forth into the training.

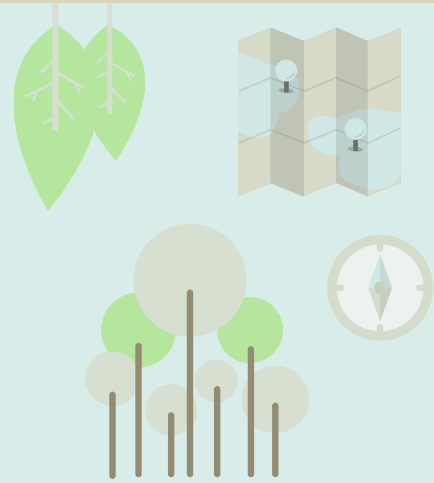
If it is possible I like to dedicate as much time as I can walking and getting to know the place where I am going to work. I find that little stories of the place are very universal. It is easier to share a common meaningful experience if we reflect ourselves in the direct environment we are in.

I also like to read any material the participants have provided about themselves before the course as many times as possible, so as to get a "common sense" of what is expected and the potentials of the group.

When it finally comes to designing activities, I like to keep things as simple as possible; I like to draw from things I have vividly experienced myself before, be it as a trainer or participant. No matter how modern or "hip" a topic is, I tend to find myself dwelling around ancient ways of addressing these same questions.

HOW DO YOU PROMOTE YOURSELF AS A TRAINER?

Word of mouth by those who know me and my "presence" on the Internet are my two main ways of promoting myself as a trainer. I feel the latter should serve as a corroboration of the first, so that if someone has heard about me, and they decide to Google me, they find the things they want to see, if you know what I mean... ;)



More than personal branding I think it is about sharing your personal story. In an honest, updated and engaging way. There is an ever growing interest in the field of facilitation and training, an overall sign of positive interest in new ways of learning and sharing. However, from a professional networking point of view, my advice is try and find your true essence and learn to let go, so that there is enough for each one of us to specialize, -or become special- with our own skills, attitudes and knowledge.



The project "Meet your Trainer" was created by Youth and Environment Europe for young people who would like to become trainers in non-formal educational field.



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Funders:

