

Reflections on TEDxUSU | CPD

Vonda Jump

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Note: Senior researcher Vonda Jump was an invited presenter at the recent TEDxUSU event.

By Vonda Jump

Being involved in the TEDx process and actual event was such an amazing honor and treat for me. It definitely created extra work and stress, but they were well worth it, and I learned so much from the TEDx producers, my fellow speakers, and all of the TEDx staff. I've never been involved in any type of production, and so everything was brand new for me.

It was such an honor to be associated with newly met colleagues from across the university, studying in the areas of gerontology and Alzheimer's disease, folklore, ADHD and attention, climate, history, and ecology and wildlife conservation, and from the community, learning more about how to meet the needs of students with diverse abilities. Meeting Luciana from the Food and Drug Administration was also powerful, as she is a physician working on so many important issues around the world, including response to diseases that have the potential to affect millions of people. Yet she was very down to earth and excited to watch all of our presentations, and she complimented us on our work here at USU. I believe she

left with a very good impression of USU, the high level of work that is accomplished here, and the wonderful welcoming that she received from all.

The overall tone for TEDx was probably what I enjoyed the most. Everybody was so supportive, and there was such a can-do attitude around every little detail, even though I know that many last-minute changes to slides created so much stress for quite a few people. But you would never know it, as they just said, "Yes, I can make that happen. Do you need anything else?"

The TEDx staff members are all so young, energetic, creative, and appear to be really excited for their work. I loved getting to interact with them, and am sad that that time together is now over. I would imagine that such a can-do attitude comes from Anna McEntire, who directed all things TEDx at USU. Anna is such a capable and positive person, and always made sure that we had the resources and supports we needed to be successful. She was willing to meet with us whenever we needed it and did everything she could to ensure that our needs were met. And of course, Brandon Couch was also a huge support in making everything that we needed to happen happen. TEDxUSU would not be successful without them.

As for my experience the night of TEDxUSU, I was just riveted. It was a magical evening, with so many stimulating talks that helped people think of different issues in a new or different light, and it seemed as if people chose our performance night for their night to peak! I had a moment where I honestly could not remember what I was going to say next, and the audience just patiently waited for me to pull myself together and continue on my talk. The support and engagement of the audience was really amazing as well.

My talk was originally how to build babies' brains. Because we recently found out that my only child, Bianca, is going to have a baby (yes, I'm going to be a grandma! So exciting!), I decided to revise my talk so that I would be talking to Bianca about how to promote positive brain development in her baby boy. It suddenly became so much more emotional for me, as these issues are important to me, but my daughter and soon-to-be-born grandson are intensely personal. I enjoyed getting to talk to Bianca through a lens such as TEDx, and I hope that she also enjoyed herself and my message about building babies' brains.

My 3 key points were the following:

Hold your baby (we help to regulate their breathing, heart rate, digestion, temperature, and crying, which helps to promote their positive brain development).

Talk with your baby (their brains are just exploding with activity when we talk with them when they are in our arms, as they hear us, see us, smell us, and feel us).

Observe your baby to understand his needs and how to respond to them (when we respond consistently and appropriately to babies' needs, their brain development is facilitated).

I hope people can use this information, as building babies' brains to succeed is very simple, but so important for everything that comes next for the baby.