

**Bonni:** [00:00:01] On today's episode of Teaching in Higher Ed I get to talk to Maha Bali about collaboration.

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**Bonni:** [00:00:19] Welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. This is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to increase our personal productivity approaches, so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

**Bonni:** [00:00:46] Hello this is Bonni Stachowiak and you might have heard today's guest's name before. She is prolific on Twitter. She is a wonderful blogger. She is a phenomenal collaborator which is the topic of today's episode and she is the winner of the first annual maneuver award. And I'm excited to be able to talk to her today. Today's guest is Dr. Maha Bali and she's an associate professor of practice at the Center for Learning and Teaching at the American University in Cairo and she's a full-time faculty developer and also teaches courses she'll share a little bit about that. In today's episode and it's such an honor to have her on the show today. Maha, welcome to Teaching in Higher Ed.

**Maha:** [00:01:37] Thank you Bonni for having me. I'm really looking forward to this conversation.

**Bonni:** [00:01:41] You know I have been looking forward to it for a while. We mentioned your name because you are the big winner of the first annual maneuver award.

**Maha:** [00:01:51] I am so proud of that.

**Bonni:** [00:01:53] And our guy Nick who teaches in the Middle East wanted me to start the episode by telling you congratulations for that. And he enjoyed

hearing your story. We're talking today about collaboration and one of the things I'd love to hear from you is what is an early memory of powerful collaboration that you have whether that's from your childhood or even early in your career.

**Maha:** [00:02:17] It's funny because the first one that comes to mind was related to Valentine's Day at my high school and maybe that's because there was a little pedagogy chat about love recently. But in my school we had for valentines day we'd do this thing where instead of each student getting their own flowers we would organize it so that we would get orders for flowers what kind of flower what color flowers I'd like roses and carnations and white and red and people would say what kind of flower they wanted and who they wanted it to go to and whether they wanted to be anonymous or if they wanted to leave a note.

**Maha:** [00:02:52] And one of my friends used to do it before and then he graduated and it was my turn I decided to do it. And I remember very well that to get that happening. A lot of people pitched in to help me at different stages of the process including getting the orders and then putting the flowers in the right place and then distributing them the morning of Valentine's Day and making sure they got to the right place. Yeah. And that was a collaboration. And my parents collaborated to like driving us around had to go and get the flowers and to and from school and stuff.

**Bonni:** [00:03:23] It must have been quite a team they're coming together around those flowers. What are some of the things that you think when you think about collaboration because of course this is something that is integral to your work and something that you promote and instill and teach and encourage. What are the most common things that you observe that hold people back from being good at it.

**Maha:** [00:03:46] Oh what holds people for being good at it that's a good question. There are several I guess. One thing is definitely power and hierarchy. So what I found is you know I'm very well known for being very good at virtual collaboration. And the reason I think virtual collaboration works really well is that there is there's usually no hierarchy between you and the person that you're working with virtually because they're not your boss.

**Maha:** [00:04:08] They are not they're not competing with you for a job you know we're just two people interested in the same thing and working together and it's good for both of us and we don't need to really worry about that. There are power differences definitely in a lot of different ways like whose language is

more dominant who's more known in the universe. And that kind of thing. But that hierarchy type of thing gets in the way of trying to collaborate with people who are with me face to face for example and I still do. But you know these things get in the way a lot more.

**Maha:** [00:04:37] And the other thing is I think letting yourself go and letting yourself give. I don't think all people have the same willingness to open up themselves when they're collaborating with someone you know to give everything they can into that collaboration. And then I think of course all kinds of misunderstandings. You know when you're working with somebody people want to work in different ways or they want to prioritize different things and they don't always know how to express them or to you know Yet they don't always realize that they need to be explicit about certain things.

**Maha:** [00:05:10] So for example this is something I talk about lot working on google docs with people which I love doing. Sometimes you just need to let people know in advance that we're going to work in this document. What did it what does it mean to resolve a comment. Because and this is a gender dynamic that usually women you know she started commenting you start having discussions about it. Usually men are very happy to just go and resolve the comment without going back to the original person who made the comment from generalizing here.

**Maha:** [00:05:42] But I've had some experience with men who do that. And women are usually much more careful about that. Are you done. Can I resolve the comment you know. You know whatever it is you're working on certain sort of norms that you if you're not you haven't worked with that person or that group of people a lot in advance then you could have problems but that kind of thing.

**Maha:** [00:06:00] One of the articles I've got on hybrid pedagogy with the Rhizo 14 group is called Writing the Unreadable Text and that was what we call swarm writing where everybody goes in and does everything and that's playful and that's the way it's supposed to be.

**Maha:** [00:06:13] But when you're writing the article that's going to get published then then people have different expectations of what's going to happen and how they're going to do it. And it can get really people get really offended by how someone edits their text or changes the direction of what they're working on as just one of those things that if you don't talk to someone when you're talking when you're working with a new team you need to talk about it again and things like that.

**Bonni:** [00:06:36] I would imagine that that is particularly so for those who had trouble in the first place letting themselves go and letting themselves give then but that makes it that much harder because I took this risk and it didn't work and now I'm back into my shell I guess.

**Maha:** [00:06:51] Yeah. Which you know you just reminded me of one of the most beautiful collaborations I've ever been part of. It's at the beginning of the Rhizo 15 just in case people don't know what the rise of things are. These are Rhizomatic learning MOOCs that were led by Dave Cormier and the way he leads them is to give very little content from his site where everything almost everything comes from participants with very little guidance from him.

**Maha:** [00:07:14] And so there was one week where Tayna Schickele from Australia wrote something on her blog responding to a prompt by Dave as she wrote it as a play and then we a group of us went and we put that into a Google doc and we hacked it and we added more characters to it and then we made into a podcast and it's on soundcloud I can give you the link at the end of this.

**Maha:** [00:07:36] And so what we ended up doing is that we added characters. We had different characters speaking different languages. Each person chose a character. The story has inner voice and we made her and she said she is multiple and that's part of our asthmatic learning. And so the multiple had different names and they were different people with different voices and that's how we did the podcast right. And then putting someone put it all together I think it was Kevin Hodgson who threw it all together.

**Maha:** [00:08:01] And then when that collaboration happened all of us were like really really excited about it. But then one other person said how she would feel if someone took a piece of her worked and did that and she would be offended. And it was very interesting because we know Tanya well and we didn't think she would be offended. But but then if there is a whole group of people like that and someone is new into that team or into that group and isn't comfortable with that what happens when you're so used to doing it that you don't even realize that you might be hurting someone by collaborating in this hacking way you know.

**Bonni:** [00:08:32] Yeah yeah.

**Maha:** [00:08:33] Yeah. Different people are open to different things and get upset with different things versus other people who get flattered by you know.

**Bonni:** [00:08:39] And that's so much a cultural thing. One of the things we're going to be sharing about later has to do with me is that can we think about collaboration as it enters music and I've shared about on the show before. Those musicians that are creating music from all around the world and they'll contribute their track of their instrument and it just turns into this beautiful collaborative work of music.

**Maha:** [00:08:59] That's beautiful. That's beautiful.

**Bonni:** [00:09:01] So if you're trying to convince you or in your persuasion mode and you're trying to convince the reluctant that it is worth risking the cultural barriers it is worth risking the power and the hierarchy dynamics that are hard to rid ourselves of. What do you tell us are the benefits of collaboration.

**Maha:** [00:09:21] Well before before you talk about the benefits of collaboration I think we need to talk about very specific kinds of collaboration.

**Bonni:** [00:09:26] Sure.

**Maha:** [00:09:27] Right. So I was recently at e-learning Africa Conference and I talked about in scholarship you couldn't collaborate on your teaching. So where you're either teaching with someone which I do regularly or you're taking a part of your course and doing something with someone outside of the course altogether and I do that too. Or you collaborate on research. So you're doing research or writing together or something like that or you collaborate on professional development.

**Maha:** [00:09:53] So where any kind of professionals like you create a conference together or whatever or you collaborate on learning together. Just you know because academics never stop learning right. So these are very different things because the kinds of risks you take and the kinds of things that you put forward and defend and then you can do this thing where you do research or research with someone on just like this one paper and then you never talk to them again if you want or there are other things that you would do you know on a more long term sustainable basis. If we're talking about teaching specifically let's start with that one. Is that good. Should we start with that one.

**Bonni:** [00:10:26] Sounds good.

**Maha:** [00:10:27] I remember in my early teaching days the first time I ever taught a course that was part of a credit. Or you know it just it wasn't for a degree but it was part of credit it was at Rice University I was teaching English as a second language or a foreign language and I had never taught English to a group of people who don't speak Arabic. Before and that's very important when you're teaching a new language to people who don't speak your you don't all speak the same language then translation is not on the table at all. You know and it was my first time doing that. And I remember that you know I knew I was teaching which course and which level one day before I was teaching and I got the books like one day before.

**Maha:** [00:11:07] And one of the good things about that institution is that all the teachers shared their material in this shared drive and there was a shared room that we all use so you could all talk in between and there were these slightly more experienced teachers who were available to help mentor me and that was only for like a semester when I came to Egypt and started teaching more regularly I always found that I always needed someone to talk to about my teaching like there was always something that I was wondering what should I do next or this happened today. And what does it mean. I don't know if I'm assuming other teachers have those questions.

**Maha:** [00:11:42] But teaching is usually thought of as an isolated profession or you don't usually do that. I mean like I got the Manure Award because I shared a teaching failure I'm very open to teaching sharing my teaching failures. It helps and I think the more people who share these failures the more likely you are to realize that you're normal and these things happen and to learn from other people's mistakes as well as your own and what I realized working with mentors is that they helped me do that. I sought those mentors. It wasn't something that was offered to me when I came back. It's just something that I thought for myself. But there's a hierarchical kind of relationship you know it's someone with much more experience than you and you're seeking their advice and so on. But now what I do I could teach a course on creativity.

**Maha:** [00:12:21] My co- teacher is a really good friend of mine whose name is the same as my daughter's Her name is Hoda. We worked together at the Center for Learning and Teaching which is my manger but we also can teach this course and what we realized both of us working together is that even though we teach separate modules we get to talk a lot. First of all about the students and how to deal with particular students who are you know need certain things or motivate in different ways that usually nobody even a mentor

has because they don't know that student right. They would never really know the dynamics of that particular class.

**Maha:** [00:12:52] And then we also collaborate on thinking about assignments for each other's modules and like small trips or experiences that we can offer the students. And it's sort of it's enriched my teaching a lot because it gives me more ideas for my teaching than I would get if I was just doing on my own and it supports me when something goes wrong. And also it has the added advantage that if I have to go somewhere for a day she can take over that class and vice versa. And then collaborating with people outside of the class altogether.

**Maha:** [00:13:20] I often do some stuff on Twitter with my class and I loved doing that for my teaching because it offers the students. It just opens up the student's mind that you know I'm not the only expert on this thing and I'm not really necessarily the best expert on this thing but that doesn't mean that you shouldn't try to seek help from somewhere else. And there are other students doing the same thing that you're doing and maybe you can learn from each other and that sort of opens the window in my class to what is possible and I think it gives them more ideas than what they would get on their own. So yeah it's more about just expanding your horizons altogether. You know.

**Bonni:** [00:13:54] How do you see the role of an educator changing then when we are focused on creating and learning through collaboration.

**Maha:** [00:14:04] I mean I think is also it also depends on what kind of collaboration you are asking your students to do because you have a team that I work with Center for Learning and Teaching. We were giving a workshop recently about interaction and collaboration online and there are so many different ways of doing that kind of thing. So many different educator roles that you can have you can have very very structured collaboration where you tell each person what their role should be. And some people think that that's a good idea when students are younger.

**Maha:** [00:14:32] I on the other hand I'd like to give them a lot of freedom to figure out what they need to do but then help them reflect on that collaboration and I'd be there to listen and to facilitate but not not to necessarily prescribe how they want to go about it and they will make mistakes and they can learn from them. I'd rather give them that freedom and then and then help them recover from it and to sort of overly structure it.

**Maha:** [00:14:58] I think the main role of the educator I think if you want your students to collaborate is to really provide them with something where collaboration is valuable. So don't you know not to develop an assignment that really just needs one or two people and tell them they can be a group of four and then and then they'll complain of people free riding or whatever.

**Maha:** [00:15:15] Well you know because you know it needs to be an assignment that needs for people to get it done or something that that really would benefit from a diversity of students or whatever. I mean and again this is another thing like some educators would on purpose try to put a diverse group of people in one group or similar people in one group and I think that would depend for me on the kind of assignment you're doing.

**Maha:** [00:15:35] So when I was teaching teachers sometimes it would make sense that all the language teachers develop something together and all the science teachers develop something different together because you know that kind of collaboration might not make sense for certain projects and then other projects I would lead the ones from the same school collaborate together and the ones or some other times I would just let them choose whoever they want because it wouldn't matter.

**Maha:** [00:15:58] And so I think the design of the assignment and the way you design your assessments is what matters. That's the teacher role and the collaboration itself and the assessment again is you know how important is the collaboration process itself for you as a teacher versus the product of what they produce what they actually produce. And my students for the first time this semester realized that I never actually grade them on their product.

**Maha:** [00:16:22] I never give them a grade on how good the game they produce educational games. I don't have a grade for how good the game is. I have grades for how they thought about the process. I have grades for the blog post that they write in between and how they respond to feedback and how they create a making of the game sort of final multimedia project and how they reflect on their role and what they've learned creating the game.

**Maha:** [00:16:47] But there's no grade for the game itself because I care more about their learning than what they are able to come up with and the last thing I asked them to do is what would you have done if you had more time because a semester is never enough because you can always do better. And it really matters that the students can see that they can do things better. Because the last thing they do in the class is that they play test the game for like the second

or third time with an audience that's never seen it before. So they should be learning something new. Up until that last moment you know what I mean and they should be looking forward to doing more if they could've.

**Bonni:** [00:17:18] I've heard you talk about these games or I have read your words about these games and it seems so intriguing. I want to play a game.

**Maha:** [00:17:26] They write about them on their blogs and then they they get feedback and improve it. And like this semester they got feedback from really wonderful people like Remi Holden who does teaches similar things. They've had feedback from people Anna Salter before and that's that's because I collaborate with these people in so many different levels that they can then help my students very directly in this sense.

**Bonni:** [00:17:47] For people who may not know about it what is virtually connecting.

**Maha:** [00:17:53] OK that's my favorite collaboration.

**Bonni:** [00:17:56] So I should've just said what's your favorite collaboration.

**Maha:** [00:18:01] So virtually connecting and something I co-founded with Rebecca Hogue a year and a bit ago. And basically what it is is it's a way to enliven virtual participation conferences. It started out at ET4 online in 2015. I was on the steering committee and I had five papers accepted into that conference and I couldn't go in person and it wasn't just about presenting those papers or whatever I wanted to be there.

**Maha:** [00:18:26] I had participated on Twitter with a lot of conferences and it was great but it wasn't enough and I had so many friends going. I thought I was going to be able to make it and I couldn't. And Rebecca and I were in conversation about that and she said well I could be your buddy on site and connect you via video to people there and they can talk to you.

**Maha:** [00:18:45] And we tried that out and we became very funny reasons we ended up using Google Hangouts on air because technically that was the easiest one for me to put on YouTube immediately after it was done without having to upload because my upload speed is very slow. So what we ended up doing was having these conversations between me and people at a conference. But because we're using Google Hangouts on air we could livestream them and record them so that other people could watch. And

because Google Hangouts allows you to have up to 10 people we started inviting other people into that conversation and then we started realizing that it was fun for people other than myself. Right.

**Maha:** [00:19:22] And so what we've done since then is that whenever there's a conference that we're interested in or someone we know is interested in. We try to see if there's someone on site and someone virtual yahoo who would like to host them and then we invite anyone else virtually to join. They know who's the person on site that we're going to talk to and they can have the hallway conversation with a person because conferences that livestream it's great that you can watch a you know Conference session online but you miss out the interaction of being at a conference and just having these informal social conversations with people.

**Maha:** [00:19:53] And that's what virtually connection connecting is it brings those conversations to people who can't be there in person. And by doing that it sort of breaks one of the barriers in academia. Because the kinds of people who constantly go to conferences are not the graduate students they're not the adjuncts they're not the international scholars. And by bringing them through virtually connecting you allow that kind of interaction to happen and you allow people like me to have a voice in the field whereas otherwise you know having that voice through your blog or with your writing is very different than being able to converse directly in a in a regular way with other people.

**Maha:** [00:20:27] And the collaboration behind virtually connecting is we're a team of more than 60 people who make this happen by deciding this is the team that's working on this conference. Let's contact these people and we find out who knows the person that they can contact and that's all promoted and let's all invite other people who might want to join that conversation.

**Maha:** [00:20:46] And we ourselves are a community now. It's almost like we were just talking about this Autumn, Rebecca and me it's almost like an ongoing connectivist MOOC. But it's not a MOOC because it's not a course and it's not massive. It's this ongoing connection and building of personal learning networks going on all the time. And it stopped being about me at all wanting to be at a conference I started being about opening there's opportunities for anybody who's interested and having different teams of people working on it.

**Bonni:** [00:21:14] I have not gone to very many conferences in my academic experience but more recently I have been able to go to more. And my new tactic is to not try to attend to all of the sessions I think I get the most out of them

when I attend perhaps even less than half and that in-between time is the time to make those personal connections. And some of the deeper conversations about what we're all learning and reflecting on and I did get to do that at the OLC innovate conference back in April.

**Maha:** [00:21:43] Innovate? I didn't realize you were at Innovate?

**Bonni:** [00:21:44] I was.

**Maha:** [00:21:45] Nobody told us you were at innovate we would have loved to virtually connect with you.

**Bonni:** [00:21:49] Yeah I actually was I was on one of the virtually connecting sessions and I fell victim to the hierarchy in power from a not from a true legitimate power but a more expertise. I was so intimidated by people. I was very quiet but it was one of those I'd like to increase my own competence that I do have something to contribute that's something that I'll be working on in the future. But anyway I got to talk to Carl Moore who was on the show recently we just we talked for a couple of hours after the conference actually had concluded and I take away more from that one conversation than many of the formal session.

**Bonni:** [00:22:25] So it's great that then you can extend it's not just the people who physically could be there but you have more of a sense of equality to broadening that conversation but still I know sometimes it's in the sessions and then sometimes it's out it's like recreate a conference. But extending the tentacles of that I guess.

**Maha:** [00:22:43] Yeah I think if you can get both. It's great. I mean there's there's also this this other thing is that not everyone can walk up to a keynote speaker and have a conversation with them at a conference but virtually connecting allows you to do that whether you're on site or virtually. You can join that conversation a lot of people on site say that they like to join the onsite conversation so that they get that extra time with the keynote or who usually a superstar but we also have other participants who aren't you know it's and it's still fun.

**Maha:** [00:23:09] But yeah I was just thinking recently I was I went to Rome for one day to attend a conference where I co-presented the gym room which I need to talk about in a second. The other gemman was a keynote speaker and there was another keynote speaker that I hadn't attended her keynote because

it was the day before I got there but there was a I had like a one hour of downtime throughout that day and I spent time with her that other keynote speaker Laurie and Jim and a few other people and that was the best time in the whole conference.

**Maha:** [00:23:37] I hadn't attended her talk but it was really still a very valuable conversation that I could have with her and I came out with the law because I got to talk to her. You know because you know is you know you don't get to ask a lot of questions there is usually time for two or three questions. But if you didn't talk to a person then they can answer your specific questions and have you can give and take and they can get to know you and then you have a relationship that extends beyond the conference which I think is the most important thing.

**Maha:** [00:24:04] Like Jesse Stommel was saying this recent virtually connecting session at DHSI and you know there was a pedagogy lab also two institutes kind of like the digital humanities Institute which is like a one week of intensive working on a particular thing and he was saying it's not the week. That's the point. That's the red herring. The week just helps you form connections so that you later can continue collaborating and doing something together.

**Maha:** [00:24:28] And that's what I think is the thing about virtually connecting is that a lot of the a lot of the things we've been talking about recently Rebecca and Autumm and myself is that people meet other people through virtually connecting and because they've had this less formal conversation with them. They care they feel more able to then talk to them and they get to know them and they do all sorts of things together.

**Bonni:** [00:24:47] It's so true. I know one of the other calibrations we wanted to talk about was the MLA Commons: Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities and if that wasn't enough of a mouthful. The parenthetical is concepts models and experiments. And I know that you are doing some collaboration on this.

**Bonni:** [00:25:07] Would you like to take it from here and maybe share a little bit more about what is this tool and I don't think it's restricted just the value is not restricted just to the humanities I don't teach in the humanities and I find a tremendous benefit in going into and navigating the sites. Tell us a little bit more about it and then how you are collaborating.

**Maha:** [00:25:23] I think I think it's beneficial to anyone who's doing any digital work and even not digital work but it's it's really cool because different people are creating different keywords. Not a very you know a really long book

chapters right. So there are people curating a keyword giving examples of how you know if you want to focus on that keyword and you're teaching something digital and these are some resources that you could use in your teaching or examples of how other people have done it in their teaching and the way the I think of it is a book that it's not really a book I guess but it's it's done on GitHub.

**Maha:** [00:25:56] And then there's to have an open peer review process so that editors look at it and then there is an open peer review period where anybody can read this stuff and give them feedback and comments and so on. And there's one of the one of the key words from a couple of their phrases. So a couple of phases ago there was a key word of failure by the way speaking of the manure episode and then I'm collaborating with me as a more on the network cured.

**Maha:** [00:26:21] I think that's very relevant to the episode today about collaboration because first of all me and I are collaborating on it but also one of the first things we did before writing our keyword is to actually write posts on ProfHacker and the DML blog inviting our personal learning networks to help us curate the network cured. And we sort of gave them where we were thinking about the book about the keywords. And these are the different understandings of the word network that we were thinking of and what kind of resources or examples that they think would be best.

**Maha:** [00:26:51] We gave examples of what we thought was good but we opened the Google door can allow people to just submit stuff. And the thing with that is obviously some people will think of something that is not relevant but for the most part a lot of what they've given us is really really useful and valuable and there were a couple of things that came out of it.

**Maha:** [00:27:07] And so this is the value of collaboration right. One of the things that came out of it is just talk about online networks what about off line networks. What about hybrid networks. You know and that's really important like to not talk about networking because if it's something that social media invented it was you know already existed beforehand.

**Maha:** [00:27:22] And then how does it how does this hybridity work beyond just the online or just the face to face. I think it came out from that discussion that people reminded us of also the very early days of the Internet and e-learning and what was called network learning before we had collectivism. And so again it's just like when you open up something like and people are so willing to help you with it that's the thing. I think a lot of people haven't tried doing that.

Can't imagine how many people would jump in and help you for free just for the promise of attribution and I don't think they're doing it for attribution they're just doing because you ask and they can. There's just a lot of people like that.

**Bonni:** [00:28:00] It's so exciting to see to go and look I'm going to read off a few of them just to show people who might not have heard of it before I have a sense of the depth and breadth here annotation, blogging, collaboration, design, gender praxis, Project Management, race, sexuality, video and I'm only reading I think 10 percent.

**Bonni:** [00:28:20] There's just I mean in any one of those that you might click on could benefit your teaching. I mean they have all these I think part of it is because it mixes theory with practice too as you said earlier because we're actually going to be able to see how we could put this into practice in our teaching it's really fun.

**Maha:** [00:28:37] You know what I mean one of the cool things is that with so many curates it's very easy to find something. So we have network as a keyword and our community is a key word. And when we were in the community one has already been published I think that's when we went to do and we went and read what they were writing and tried to you know be more selective about what we're doing so we can differentiate between what's a community and what's a network.

**Maha:** [00:28:59] And that really makes a difference in collaboration by the way. So going back to our topic specifically is that you know one of the things about a community is that it's usually more closely knit and people know each other. It's more more of an affinity type of space and I think there are a network which could be more loosely connected and not everyone in that network necessarily needs to know each other but they're part of them. Of course they're connected in some way.

**Maha:** [00:29:20] And so I was thinking of a couple of recent collaborations of mine that are pretty hybrid in the sense that I know the people online but then we did something face to face together. So one of those was digital pedagogy like Cairo. So this is done by the hybrid pedagogy peoples who are now called Digital Pedagogy Lab and so people like Jesse Stommel and Sean Michael Morris and Bonnie Stewart I've known for like two and a bit years online and I was able to invite them over to Cairo to have this big event over here.

**Maha:** [00:29:52] And during that event, I co-facilitated a forum with Bonnie and I quote facilitated a session with Jesse and obviously we collaborated to make all this happen right. But the fact that Jesse and I could who had never met each other in person before could just sit together for a couple of hours get our workshop together and then give it together comfortably and be able to bounce ideas off each other throughout that event.

**Maha:** [00:30:16] When I was whenever we were in the same room in the session that is amazing and people don't really usually believe that we've never met face to face before. And when something similar happened to me again with Jim Groom when I went to American University in Rome and we gave a session together which was very interactive. And again we you know Jim and I know each other from Twitter and from virtually connecting but we don't actually talk synchronously a lot.

**Maha:** [00:30:42] We just met synchronously a couple of times to when I was inviting him to do the keynote and collaborating with the conference people to help him design his keynote in a way that was relevant to the attendees but then also just meeting a couple of times to prepare for the session and then giving it just makes this the celebrity aspect of it was really special. But how comfortable I was giving that session with him in ways that I was in some ways more comfortable because we understand each other's minds.

**Maha:** [00:31:11] In some ways more than people who work with me face to face because when you're face to face you don't say all your ideas out loud but if you love them and you write them all the time then the people who read you know a lot of what's happening inside your head rather than just what you choose to say in the limited time and space you have in face to face. That's that makes sense.

**Bonni:** [00:31:32] Oh it absolutely does. And when I was talking about the experience that I had on virtually connecting that will get easier as more of that hybrid type of thing happens and happens in different formats and sometimes it's live and sometimes it's asynchronous. I can totally see what you saying.

**Maha:** [00:31:49] I'm still amazed that you were I mean I don't know if the right word is intimidated I'm still amazed that you felt that way. I think it is a really confident person.

**Bonni:** [00:31:58] I remember that Jim Groom was one of the people who was on the session and I remember thinking I have nothing to say if he's in the quote

unquote room. But I have to get over that that's you know something that we can all work on because I think part of it is to try to think of the correlation between people talk about honesty honesty isn't just that what I say is true but it's also that I share the truth.

**Bonni:** [00:32:21] Sometimes you talk about honesty. It isn't just that I tell the truth but it's also that I have the courage to speak up so it's not all the words that are coming out of my mouth are true. But I'm sort of forcing the words to come out if the truth hasn't been made present already. And I sort of see that with this too that you do have to have not a form of confidence in one's self because we're I'm trying to I've been really good at shutting that off and that Goodday me I think is just a messy proposition if we're trying to win academia's game because I'm never going to win that game.

**Bonni:** [00:32:52] But it's the game that what you believe in so much for learning and for teaching. If that doesn't get said I think you're not doing your responsibility as an educator. Yeah. This is a point in the show where we get to move to recommendations. And I mentioned to you that I'm going to be recommending something musical today. And when I play it you won't get to hear it. I guess.

**Bonni:** [00:33:15] I have to ask my husband about that because I'm wondering maybe if our set up here cause I thought every was able to hear it but I'm going to start playing it and then I'll talk about it as it plays the music that everyone except Maha is listening to right now is from Maggie Rogers and she is an NYU student and the quote unquote audience is the other music students at NYU but also a famous musician Pharrell Williams who I think is most famous for his song called Happ that was in the movie Despicable Me. I think I'm getting that right. He's an artist in residence at NYU and got to hear her music live.

**Bonni:** [00:33:57] And I'm linking to this in the show notes I hope everyone will go and look at those because it's not just hearing the music but it's also seen the expression on Farrel's face as he hears her music has he's just completely captivated by it. And it is incredibly captivating music and it's just beautiful to watch the expression on his face. And then it's very beautiful to see him encourage her as a musician as her teacher at the end and it just spoke to me so much about music. The beauty of it. It spoke so much about teaching and about learning and I suggest people go click on the link and check that out. And Maha, what do you have to suggest to the listeners today.

**Maha:** [00:34:39] So I have a couple of recommendations. One is definitely try virtually connecting to [virtuallyconnecting.org](https://www.virtuallyconnecting.org) and check out which campuses are going to be out soon. If you're in any pedagogical field you'll probably find something of interest to you and you can watch if you're not comfortable joining sessions. But there's always space for people to to ask to join sessions so I hope people come because it's at some of the best learning you can get because one one graduate student recently wrote about how as a graduate student you don't have insight into how academics behave and how they are like when they let their guard down when they're unplugged. And that that virtually connecting offers you that. And then it makes you feel like other academics are actually just human just like you and you can start to imagine what that might be like and to have conversations with these kinds of people early on as is really helpful so especially for younger people or early career academics I think I would definitely recommend virtually connecting them.

**Maha:** [00:35:34] The other thing is just speaking of hybrid collaborations I'm after after we had Digital Pedagogy Lab Cairo. Sean and Jess asked me to become the International Director for Digital Pedagogy Eab. And so they're having an institute in Fredericksburg Virginia in August and that institute is a much larger one than the Cairo one. It's got four tracks and all that and they've got a virtually connecting fellow who's autumn Keynes who's one of the principal members of virtually connected and what we're trying to do is we're trying to have a good amount of hybridity in the conference so it's a digital pedagogy that's on site and it totally makes sense to have a digital aspect to it. And so there's that collaboration where we're trying to have a lot of hybrid sessions there so you can make it on site. There are awesome people there like Cathy Davidson and Tressie McMillan Cottom and Amy Collier and Lee Skallerup-Bissette and Martha Burtis.

**Bonni:** [00:36:31] And I hear Audrey Watters is going to be there too.

**Maha:** [00:36:34] Yes. Audrey is one of my favorite people as well. A lot of really really wonderful people there and Jesse and Sean of course. But if you can't make it on site we're going to be virtually connecting from there and trying to bring in as much as we can of that. So and trying to internationalize it. That's the part of the International Director part of what I'm trying to bring in people from different parts of the world to be able to have a voice in that event even if they can't be there on site.

**Bonni:** [00:36:58] I was quite salivating when I read the description for it and I'm not going to be able to make it in person this year and I'm so glad to know that there'll be opportunities to connect in other ways.

**Maha:** [00:37:06] Yeah. And then there was one last year hopefully there will be another one next year they're trying to have an international one every year. The first one was in Cairo. There's one in Prince Edward Island in Canada this year. But in the future they'll have at least one outside of the U.S. So hopefully. And obviously another one in the U.S. in.

**Maha:** [00:37:23] So hopefully you'll have other opportunities but for this year if you can't make it there is virtually connecting and if you can there's still a few spaces left as we speak. I don't know if by the time the podcast goes out but because some of the tracks are closed but maybe others and the keynote will be live streamed and I think public. So if you live nearer by. I mean that's not the case for you. But if you live near Virginia you might want to drive over for a keynote or two.

**Bonni:** [00:37:49] Well Maha, thank you so much for investing your time not just today but your time and all of us you are a master educator and someone who teaches every day of your life. And thanks for all of your contributions to our work and the model that you provide for collaboration. It was just so fun to get to talk to you today.

**Maha:** [00:38:08] Thank you so much. I don't know necessarily that I'm a master or whatever but I think I'm a master learner. I think I'm a good learner and I think you know if you want to keep learning I think collaboration is necessary because each to learn from somebody and with somebody.

**Bonni:** [00:38:21] I couldn't agree more.

**Maha:** [00:38:22] Thank you Bonni.

**Bonni:** [00:38:24] It was so great to get to have a conversation with Maha today. This is Episode 108 of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast if you would like to look at the show notes and trust me there's going to be a lot of clickable things in there. You can go to [teachinginhighered.com/108](https://teachinginhighered.com/108). You're also welcome to make comments there or tweet to me @Bonni208 or to Maha @Bali\_maha. But we'll also have links to those things in the show notes at [teachinginhighered.com/108](https://teachinginhighered.com/108).

**Bonni:** [00:39:01] And if you don't want to remember to go to download and look at tichy notes and all that stuff just subscribe to our weekly updates and you can do that at teaching and hire red dot com slash subscribe. And that way you'll get those automatically coming into your inbox. Once a week along with most weeks an article about teaching or productivity written by me and I look forward to having you connect in some way or another whether that's on Twitter or through the email updates or we even have a Slack channel now with a number of people from the community and it's really been fun to kind of have that open collaboration but also there's enough of privacy sense where we're not completely out to the open public admitting our failures et cetera.

**Bonni:** [00:39:44] So feel free to get in touch with me if you'd like to be added to that group and just thanks so much for listening. As always if you have suggestions for future topics or future episodes you can do that at [teachinginhighered.com/feedback](http://teachinginhighered.com/feedback). And love to see those reviews coming in on iTunes that's helping more people discover the show and helping us overtake the pirates podcast the history of pirates have no ill will toward the people that produced that podcast. Other than a fine sense of competition that I'd like to overtake them at some point in the coming weeks I probably shouldn't have admitted that here on the show but I just feel so open now. After talking to them I feel like I should just say it. So go up and leave a review or credit rating you could just put a number of stars up there and help more people discover the show. Thanks so much for listening and I'll see you next time.

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