



TEACHING TIPS

Engaging Your Learner

MOTIVATING STUDENTS: GOING BEYOND GRADES

While many students are motivated intrinsically, others are driven by grades and still others expect their teachers to inspire and stimulate them. Of course, there are no magic bullets, but here are some simple guides to help you keep students focused and motivated.

1. Help students feel they are active participants in the learning community, not just recipients of your information. Treat them with respect.
2. Capitalize on students' existing needs. They will want to learn so they can accomplish a task, improve skills, meet challenges. Help them find personal meaning and value.
3. Hold students to a high standard. This tells the students you believe they can accomplish much and also gives them a feeling of success when they meet those standards.
4. Rely on logic whenever possible. Tell a student when something is a fact that must be memorized and when the material or process is based on logic. Don't forget to lead them through the "logic pathway."
5. Use visual aids, since many of today's students are visual learners.
6. Emphasize the most critical points continuously through exams, classroom activities, clinical opportunities and other learning contexts.
7. Help students create a link to earlier learned information when teaching new concepts. Remember these links can be to clerkships other than ob-gyn and to specific clinical activities.
8. As a teacher, be enthusiastic, organized and involved.
9. Emphasize mastery and learning, rather than grades.
10. Provide feedback as soon as possible.

Sources: Honolulu Community College. Faculty development teaching techniques: Core abilities-Motivating students. Barbara Gross Davis. <http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/teachtip.htm>

Motivating students; Lana Becker and Kent N. Schneider; Motivating students: 8 simple rules for teachers. <http://commons.trincoll.edu/ctl/files/2013/08/WEEK-10-Motivating-Students.pdf> (accessed 7/19/14)

A FRIENDLY LITTLE GAME, ANYONE?

Learners working in small groups learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same content is presented in other instructional formats. They find this learning more rewarding and enjoyable, too. Problem-based learning is steeped in the tradition of using groups to identify solutions, which are usually better than what a single individual could derive. Groups can be assembled on an ad hoc basis, for a specific task or as study teams. To work best, groups should have a task that is relevant, promotes interdependence, fits the learners' skills and abilities, and fosters some competition.¹

Team competition in a game show format - such as Jeopardy!
- can be very energizing and educational for the participants.

It is particularly effective for learners who know each other well and feel safe exposing their knowledge in front of others. Adult learners like this kind of safety to feel comfortable participating.

Arranging the session such that the learners must confer before giving the answer will create the interdependence. Having the teams choose their names also adds to the team spirit and group identity. Not deducting points for incorrect answers adds to a supportive atmosphere. Be creative with "ring-in" devices, such as a baby rattle, a kazoo, cow bell, etc. Also a prize that the "winning team" can share (e.g., bags of candy) with the other team(s) is a stress reliever from the competition.

Some ready sources for quiz questions can be found in review books, Web sites and the ABOG ABC exam. Commercial game show software is available; however, it is easy to create the same kind of game board with note cards on a bulletin board.

Next time you want to organize a review session for your learners, consider team competition. It is an exciting way to review the material, energize the learners and stimulate some team spirit.

Source: *From the hard copy book, Tools for Teaching, by Barbara Gross Davis, Jossey-Bass, 2nd Edition Publishers: San Francisco, 2009.*

TEACH BY EXAMPLE

Want to help learners understand something complex? Then, use something from their daily lives that will work as an analogy to describe the concept, entity or process. For example, the menstrual cycle can be described as a production line¹ with a conveyor belt staffed by managers and workers responsible for inputting, processing, maintaining and monitoring "products." In this example, feedback to the "staff" is critical at each juncture to maintain proper production levels. It is useful for learners to experiment with changing input and feedback to see how these changes affect production levels in the process. How can you convey the amount of DNA in a cell? How about 30 miles of monofilament line stuffed into a blueberry?²

Examples work even better when we provide a visual demonstration. Use whatever is handy; expensive models are not necessary. The simpler forms might use a drawing on a chalkboard; the more elaborate ones may use inanimate objects. Although there are at least three types of learning styles³, each style responds well to concrete examples.

Demonstrations enhance learning and provide powerful memory cue for long-term retention, much like an emotionally charged story or event.

Sources: ¹Thanks to Gary Frishman, MD, Brown University

²Thanks to Debra DeRosa, PhD, Northwestern University

³www.ldpride.net/learningstyles.MI.htm (accessed 7/19/2014). This Web site offers a self-assessment of preferred learning styles.

EXPERIENCE IS THE BEST TEACHER

You are listening to a physician and you hear these words: “Let me tell you about a case that happened to me.” Suddenly your ears perk up and you are fully engaged. Chances are you will remember this case better than the content of the talk, particularly if the physician uses an example that is personal and has an emotional element, such as an unexpected outcome: “She nearly bled out and we had to transfuse her repeatedly to keep her alive.”

The often overlooked, but obvious, truth is that physicians, like everyone else, enjoy hearing real-life stories. Physicians want to hear about other physicians’ experiences, particularly the near misses. They use their clinical reasoning skills to see if the patient’s patterns fit with what they know (scripts) or if they need to adjust their thinking.

When you ask medical learners to problem-solve on your case, you can learn a lot about their clinical reasoning skills. A study of distinguished clinical teachers found that they use scripts on teaching rounds to quickly diagnose the patient’s problems and, simultaneously, to diagnose the learner’s level of understanding.¹

Use your real-life case experiences to help others develop their clinical reasoning skills and to potentially prevent a mishap. Real experiences are inherently attention-getting and can be used in any number of ways to teach learners how to problem solve.²

Sources: ¹Irby D. How attending physicians make instructional decisions when conducting teaching rounds. *Acad Med* 1992; 67(10):630-638.

²Edwards J, Marier R. *Clinical teaching for medical residents*. New York: Springer. 1988: 70-71.

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