

# Learning From My Mistakes: Developing an Orientation Towards Learner Styles

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# What I Brought to the Experience

## ■ Motivation

- Wanting to be loved and admired by my students

## ■ What I tried to be (and thought I'd be)

### – Lecturer

- Brilliant, scintillating, entertaining and inspiring

### – Clinical Rounds

- Wise, demanding, a role model

# What I Brought to the Experience

- Small group instructor
  - Interactive, facilitator, exciting person to dialogue with
- Individual supervision
  - Trusted mentor, confidante, intimate

# What Really Happened

## ■ Lectures

- Boring, off the mark, confusing to students

## ■ Clinical Rounds

- intimidating, inhibiting

## ■ Small Groups

- Totally unable to elicit discussion

## ■ Individual Supervision

- Demanding, distant

- A handful of students would pester me, become demanding, nudge – I experienced this as unpleasant and draining

# And Sooooooooooooo

- Thoroughly demoralized, I considered going into private practice
- And then, a question occurred to me
  - How did I relate to teachers I really loved?
- And then, someone pointed out to me that two of my students had some of the highest grades on an exam.
  - Both of them had said little during our small group sessions; I had them pegged as hostile to psychiatry

# And Finally, I Began to Think About the Students, Not about Me

- How typical a student/resident was I?
  - Became a Psychiatrist
  - From the Northeast
  - A playful intellectual
  - Fairly rebellious
  - Became an academician
  - Fairly assertive, thrived in a sink or swim environment

# And this Began a Long Slow Process of Getting to Know My Students and Residents

- Distinct aspects of Texas Culture
- How does someone who is practice oriented approach information?
- How does someone who went to a large state university feel about a professor?
- How does someone who didn't go to an elite college feel about being put on the spot intellectually?
- How much support vs. pushing do most people need?

# And I Began Listening to Occasional Comments by Senior Educators

- A lecture tries to answer a question the listener is usually not yet asking
- A teacher is someone who likes to talk about what s/he knows
- All education is expensive ... and money is the least of it.

# And then I could think about myself again and See Where I fit in this

- I'm a smartass, but not an entertainer or comedian
- I love the uncertainty of not knowing what is going to demand my attention next.
- I love to laugh.
- I really enjoy having my ideas challenged in a thoughtful way
- I particularly enjoy learning someone else's story.

# By Harnessing These, and others, I finally began to be a pretty good teacher!

## ■ Lectures

- Good but not great.
- I've gotten very good at getting listeners to ask the question I'm trying to answer
- Try to emphasize clarity and organization

## ■ Clinical Rounds

- Mainly do case conferences
- Try to get students/residents to share a sense of enjoyment at the challenges of our uncertainty
- Mainly try to model certain skills
- I think I'm highly valued especially for selected types of patients

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(continued)

## ■ Small Groups

- Probably my forte
- Have them pimp me and get me talking

## ■ Individual Supervision

- Also very good, now
- More tolerant of initial lack of psychological sophistication
- Engage in the patient's and resident's narrative