

37. “In the Long Run”

When learners perceive something as a limitation, we can help them to visualize it over a longer span of time in order to show them that where they are is just one instant in a lifetime of experiences. When I took a yearlong course in chemistry in high school, I struggled. In order to keep my grades up, I spent many nights at the local university library reading chemistry books to help me understand the various concepts that the teacher was presenting.

When I went to the University of Tennessee, chemistry was the major freshman “flunk-out” course in the College of Home Economics. As a result of studying the chemistry textbooks at the university when I was in high school, I was able to do well, while many other students had difficulty with the course. In the long run, my perseverance in a difficult situation paid off.

When students express limitations, it is usually because they see themselves only in the present, rather than incorporating the past or the future. Use the phrase “in the long run” to help students visualize themselves over a longer span of time.

- “I am spending a lot of time learning this.”
- “How might that really be a gift *in the long run*?”
- “I can’t do this yet.”
- “How might that be the very best thing *in the long run*?”
- “I am struggling to learn this.”
- “In what ways could that be the biggest benefit of all to you *in the long run*?”
- “I am having difficulty.”
- “What might be the benefits of that difficulty *in the long run*?”

Potential Functions for This Tip: Teaching, Planning for the Future, Responding to Objections, Encouraging Students, Influencing Students, Resolving Conflicts

44. Laughing

Nothing does the body good like an old-fashioned belly laugh! Cousins (2005) found that when people who had terminal illnesses watched comedy videos, their health improved. When we laugh with students, we build relationships, increase endorphins in our bodies, breathe deeply, and generally help ourselves feel better. Laughter truly is the best medicine, and we can share it with our students! Our students will remember the way we make them feel. If we are always serious, they will remember that. If we laugh with them a lot, they will remember that, as well.

When I was teaching 7th grade, I did a unit on stand-up comedy. Many of the students appeared to want to be stand-up comedians, so I thought that we might as well get some mileage from it! I read books by various comedians, shared their strategies with the students, and had students develop routines. Each day I invited one student to present a routine after lunch. In the book *Teaching Class Clowns (and What They Can Teach Us)* (Purkey, 2006), the author suggests ways to use the humor of class clowns for the benefit of all. Wanzer and Frymier (1999) found that “student perceptions of instructors’ HO [humor orientation] were significantly and positively associated with student learning” (p. 57).

Numerous resources contain tips for laughing with students and using humor in the classroom. Why not begin each day with the “*Joke of the Day*”? Why not invite students to bring jokes to tell? (At certain grade levels, you may need to censor them first.) Why not intentionally build laughter—big belly laughs—into the school day?

Potential Functions for This Tip: Building Relationships, Teaching, Planning for the Future, Responding to Objections, Encouraging Students, Influencing Students, Resolving Conflicts

49. Meanings

As humans, we are meaning-making machines. We seek to attach meaning to events in order to make sense of them. Sometimes the meanings that we attach are helpful and productive, yet sometimes they are not.

For some reason, in the field of education, learners can get the idea that they are “failures” just because they didn’t do as well as they had wanted in a class, because they hadn’t taken the time to prepare, and so on. Instead of letting their attached meaning limit them, we can help students attach new meanings to a situation in order to open up possibilities.

- “I am a failure.”
 - “Just because you didn’t have the time to study when your father was in the hospital that makes you a failure?”
 - “I feel so bad because I didn’t get the project done in time.”
 - “Because you have been putting the needs of others ahead of your own, benefiting others in a variety of ways, you haven’t taken the time to do what was needed yet for completing this project?”
 - “I can’t do this.”
 - “Perhaps this means that you just haven’t taken the time to learn to do it, or that you haven’t taken advantage of the many people around you who would be happy to assist you in moving forward and understanding how to do it.”
 - “I can’t stop thinking about everything that has happened in the past.”
 - “How can that be a gift that helps you to make meaning from the past in order to move forward in your life?”

Potential Functions for This Tip: Responding to Objections, Encouraging Students, Influencing Students, Resolving Conflicts

67. Questions from Students

We have all had times when we declined to ask a question, even though we had one, because of the way someone asked us if we had any questions. It could have been the person's tone of voice, or it could have been the way that the person phrased the question.

The way we ask for student questions can be either inviting or disinviting. Obviously, we want to ask for their questions in such a way as to invite them to ask and help them to feel comfortable. We want them to know that their questions are both wanted and valued.

Grinder (personal communication, September 1995) suggested stepping to a new place, away from the spot where you present information, when you invite students to ask questions. Thus, you show students that when you are in this particular spot, they can ask questions. You also should use an approachable voice, bobbing your head up and down and curling your voice up at the end of the question. Your palms can also be turned up.

These are some inviting ways of asking questions:

- “What might be some of the questions that you have about the material that we just covered?”
- “As you consider the material that we are discussing, what are some of the areas that are not yet clear?”
- “What questions might you have about the applications of the material that we are learning?”

These are some disinviting ways to ask for questions:

- “Who has a question?”
- “Any questions?”
- “Does anyone have a question?”

Potential Functions for This Tip: Building Relationships, Teaching, Resolving Conflicts

71. Resources

Have you ever felt that you were not able to do a task, but that if you only had more resources, you would be able to do it? Still, you were not sure which resources to access or where to get them.

When students are feeling “stuck,” they generally feel like they are lacking in resources. We can help them to notice the resources that have been available all along. What external and internal resources are available to them that they had not recognized until now? You can point out specific resources to students, or you can invite them to explore the many resources that are available by asking them questions such as the following:

- “I’m wondering what resources that you haven’t accessed yet will assist you in the process of completing this project.”
- “As you look around the room, noticing your colleagues who are incredible resources, who might you be able to call on first?”
- “What internal and external resources might you access that will enable you to complete the project quickly and joyfully?”
- “As you think of the tremendous wealth of resources in the library, which databases might you be able to access first?”
- “I wonder if you have recognized yet all of the resources that are inside of you that you have used in the past for succeeding in other situations.”
- “Are you curious now to recognize the many resources that are available to you as you are in the process of moving forward toward achieving your exciting goals?”
- “Have you yet noticed your enriching capabilities that have been there all along and can assist you in the process of achieving your goals?”

Potential Functions for This Tip: Teaching, Planning for the Future, Responding to Objections, Encouraging Students, Influencing Students, Resolving Conflicts

72. Review, Review, Review

An old joke: A young man in New York City stops someone on the street, asking, “How do you get to Carnegie Hall?” Thinking that the young man wants to play at the esteemed musical venue, the New Yorker responds, “Practice, practice, practice.”

How do we assist our students in learning? Review, review, review. How many times have we thought, “I said this, yet they didn’t learn it! They must not have been listening. They should know it because I said it one time.” In reality, even when we attend classes as adults, do we necessarily listen to every word that the presenter says? Do our minds ever wander in learning situations? Of course they do, as do the minds of our students! When teachers repeat concepts, reviewing them for us, they are helping us to learn even more deeply. How do we get our students to learn? Review, review, review!

Potential Functions for This Tip: Teaching, Resolving Conflicts

73. “Say More About That”

What happens when people phrase questions as statements in a gentle and inquiring voice? “Please say more about that.” “Help me understand your reasoning behind doing that.” “Talk about your thoughts in relation to X.” These types of questions tend to be gentle, eliciting thoughtful answers.

- “Please elaborate.”
- “Tell us more.”
- “Please continue.”
- “Please talk more about your perceptions.”

Potential Functions for This Tip: Teaching, Planning for the Future, Responding to Objections, Resolving Conflicts

74. Self-Assessing

Do you remember when you were in school and you received your graded papers back from the teacher? What did you do with them? Did you take them home and treasure them, or were you more inclined to put them in the nearest trash can unless you needed to make corrections on them? All of the hard work that the teacher had done was lost. Have you ever watched your students place the papers that you so carefully graded in the trash can the first chance they got, or did you ever pick up students' papers off the ground by the bus stop?

As teachers, we tend to spend much of our time judging student work. Why should we have all of the fun? When students assess their work, it not only helps us out but also teaches them to take another point of view. Use statements like the following to have students assess their own or each other's papers:

- "Circle three examples that you like, and place a check mark by three examples that you might do differently the next time."
- "Write three sentences stating things that you like about the work. Write three sentences stating things that you would like to improve the next time."
- "Fill out the rubric, checking one through four for each of the criteria for the assignment."
 - "Place a happy face by the three items that were your favorites, and underline the three items that you might like to change."
 - "Exchange papers with the person next to you. Please use the rubric to assess the paper."
 - "Talk with the person sitting next to you about what you liked about your paper and what you might do differently the next time."

Potential Functions for This Tip: Teaching, Resolving Conflicts