

Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine

FREE* Newsletter

*(Faculty Resources for Educational Excellence)

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Quote of the Month

"I stopped feeling human when I started medical school"
(anonymous M-1 student, mid-western medical school)

"Organizational culture consists of a group of individuals all enacting a shared story" (Haidet & Stein, 2006)



"What 'Learning Environment'? Never Heard of It!"

The Learning Environment (Part Two)

Last month, we talked about the **"learning environment"** & how this term is defined in terms of 1) clarity of learning goals; 2) positive relationships between teacher & learner; and 3) work/system characteristics¹. How can we ensure a positive learning environment for students in the health professions? Here are some ideas for your consideration:

Practice principles of adult learning: we must treat our learners as adults, & we must also expect them to behave as adults. There are established principles of adult learning that will assist us in developing effective teaching methods in both classroom & clinical settings.

Pay attention to organizational culture & role modeling: an organization's culture consists of assumptions, behaviors & values that explain "how we do things around here". We often model these behaviors & values without even recognizing it. In medical centers, these examples have a particularly powerful impact on learning. The cultural environment of an organization may serve to reinforce or impede the development of positive qualities in our learners.

Remember the importance of relationships to the learning process: deliberately establishing a sense of community, where students & faculty agree to be accountable to each other & enter into a collegial relationship, will help 'draw out' (i.e., educate) the best of what is inside our students. This is not always easy in a fast-paced, stressful teaching setting; but we must work on it!

Accentuate the positive: there is evidence² that organizations which systematically call attention to successes, & that allow everyone from top to bottom in the organization to be heard concerning issues that may affect them, will result in a better learning environment.

What are your thoughts about these ideas? Would love to hear from you!!

David Musick, PhD

References:

1. Schonrock-Adema J et al. Key Elements in Assessing the Educational Environment: Where is the Theory? *Advances in Health Sciences Education* 2012; 17 (5): 727-42.
2. Litzelman DK & Cottingham AH. The New Formal Competency-Based Curriculum & Informal Curriculum at Indiana University School of Medicine: Overview & Five-Year Analysis. *Academic Medicine* 2007; 82 (4): 410-21.