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 characteristics. 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 evidence 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!!

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References: