



Establishing a Supportive Learning Environment

Current educational theories view learning as an active, constructive, social and self-reflective process. A supportive learning environment builds trust between the teacher and the learner and involves collaborative efforts focused on the learner's personal and professional development needs. Following are suggestions for establishing a supportive learning environment focused on learner's needs and are applicable to individual and group teacher-learner encounters.

Set up

- Clarifying learning objectives and expectations.
- Overviewing learning tasks.
- Establishing individual/group ground rules (manner of conduct, individual's/member's role, dynamic, peer critique, individual's/group confidentiality).
- Clarifying individual/ group schedule.
- Explaining the context of the learning environment (code; confidentiality; patient/trainee relationship; department/hospital policy; teamwork; department routines/activities/schedule).
- Introducing the learner into the context of the learning environment.

Learner-centeredness

- Knowing the learner (see Knowing the Learners Handout)
- Engaging the learner in activities that promote lifelong learning and reinforce learner's responsibility for his/her own learning. For example:
 - Independent learning
 - Self-reflection and assessment
 - Identification of his/her own needs
 - Design of action plan for improvement
 - Follow-ups on action plan
- Allowing the learner to practice skills/share knowledge/disclose honestly without feeling threatened/belittled.
- Welcoming learner's uncertainty/mistakes as opportunities to promote learning.
- Engaging the learner in collaborative efforts.
- Encouraging the learner to solicit others' opinions and feedback.
- Promoting peer feedback.

Teacher Role Model

- Showing enthusiasm for the profession and his/her own professional development.
- Promoting dialogue and listening.
- Taking the learner's perspective into account.
- Encouraging learner's questions/opinions/thoughts.
- Avoiding judgment when soliciting learner's opinions and reactions.
- Providing relevant information and opportunities for choice.
- Offering constructive feedback.
- Sharing challenging personal and professional experience with the learner.
- Sharing thought-processes/reflective practice out loud.
- Admitting knowledge limitations and/or uncertainties.
- Acting with professional conduct and good manners.
- Maintaining good relationships with patient/colleagues/staff.
- Performing teamwork.
- Soliciting feedback.
- Demonstrating commitment to lifelong learning

For questions/suggestions please contact Maria Blanco at: maria.blanco@tufts.edu