Smooth Start to the Semester

Activities and stressbusters for staying afloat

January 12, 2017 Flex Day Presentation
Objectives

- Practice and discuss strategies for working with a new group of students
- Identify common stressors for ourselves, colleagues, and students
- Introduce and practice methods for reducing stress & de-escalating stressful situations
- Identify campus resources
Activity 1: Name tent without your name

- Create a name tent – **without your name**!
- Make an image that reflects your name
  - Symbol (if your name is Bob, draw a fishing bobber)
  - Phonetic illustration (if your name is Erin, draw air filling a tire)
  - Association (if your name is Alice, draw *Alice in Wonderland*)
- Be creative!
  - Focus on the image and your name
  - Prepare to explain your image without using your name
- Explain your image without using your name
  - Wait for classmates to guess your name
  - Write your name on your name tent
  - Display your name tent during the first few weeks of class
Activity 2: 5 important things

Individual

- Write your name at the top of the notecard
- Write 5 important things about yourself that you feel comfortable with others knowing

Mingling

- Find 5 people in class
  - Introduce yourselves
  - Share your important things

Large group discussion

- Share something interesting you learned about a classmate
Syllabus stations

- Place students in groups (3 – 5 students per group depending on class size)
- Create stations in the classroom (3 – 5 depending on class)
  - Organize stations by syllabus section
  - Identify a syllabus-related activity groups need to complete at each station
- Spend 3 – 5 minutes revisiting the most important parts of the syllabus.
- Follow-up
  - End-of-week syllabus quiz
  - Review of syllabus throughout the semester
  - Random syllabus quizzes
Discussions

- What is acceptable use of technology in the class?
- How will the course be delivered and why?
- What are individual strengths and opportunities for growth? How can the class use these strengths to help one another grow this semester?
- What are the expectations for class discussions and group work?
- What are office hours and when is it appropriate to use them? How have other students used office hours?
- How do students want to see the class function during the semester?
  - What helps them learn best?
  - How do they best demonstrate and share learning?
Other activities

- Students write about/share their experiences with the content area
- Students share their prior knowledge about the course content (even misconceptions)
- Setting the tone for the course:
  - Group activity
  - Mini-lesson on something engaging, unique, out of the ordinary
    - Show what is unique about the content area
    - Help students make an authentic learning connection
- Students write goals for the course
  - How do they plan to achieve those goals
  - What support do they need to achieve those goals
Common beginning of the semester stressors for students, faculty, staff, and managers/administrators
1. What are your beginning of the semester stressors?

2. What are stressors you see your colleagues experience?

3. What are stressors you see for students?
How do we manage the stress?

- What do you do to alleviate your own stress?
- How have colleagues helped you alleviate stress?
- How do you help colleagues and students alleviate stress?
Smart Brain and Alarm Brain

(From the Lynda.com video “Stress” in the Mindfulness course. You must be logged into Lynda.com to access the link.)

- R – Recognition: Pause and notice your thoughts feelings, and sensations
- A – Acceptance: Accept the reactions as a temporary state
- I – Investigation: Ask yourself questions
  - What are these reactions pointing toward?
  - What kind of attention do they want?
- N – Nonidentification: Observe how your mind and body are reacting (you’re not defined by the symptoms and stories)

“**Right now**, I feel like I failed.”
Familiarity with campus resources

- Cañada Assessment, Response, and Evaluation of Students (CARES)
- Bridge to Opportunities Peer Mentorship Program
- Disability Resource Center (faculty and staff page)
- TRIO – Student Support Services
- Personal Counseling Services
- Veterans Center
- Health Services
- SparkPoint
- DREAM Center
- EOPS, CARE, CalWORKs, and Foster Youth Success Initiative (FYSI)
“Yes and” instead of “Yes but”

(From the Lynda.com video “Yes and’ vs. ‘Yes, but’” in the Leading with Applied Improv course. You must be logged into Lynda.com to access the link.)
Yes and/Yes but Practice

- All we do is go through the syllabus on the first day of class.
- Filing for financial aid is confusing.
- I need this class to graduate/transfer after this semester.
- I never read the textbooks in my other classes.
- I didn’t know the deadline!
Stay positive

- Change negative language to affirmative language
  - “We won’t be learning that.”
    - “Our focus will be a bit different …”
    - “That sounds like an interesting topic to explore. Let’s discuss how it relates to the content in this course.”
  - “I can’t do that for you.”; “That’s not possible.”
    - “This process ensures that we maintain our accreditation and federal approvals. Let’s work together so that everything is in order for you to move forward.”
    - “I need to follow these guidelines and processes so that our college maintains its approvals. Maybe we can create a checklist for you to make the process clearer.”
  - “I’m sorry, I can’t help you with that.”
    - “I’m going to connect you with ___________ from _______________ who is the best person to help you with this.
  - Instead of “yes, but”, try “yes and!”
Give yourself a break!

- **Self-compassion break**
- **How would you treat a friend?**
- **21-day self-care challenge**
- **Practice gratitude**
  - **Three good things**
  - **Gratitude letter**
  - **Mental subtraction of relationships**
  - **Savoring walk**

When we help ourselves, we help our students!