

Speed Bumps and Road Blocks: Getting Around Student Resistance

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What am I doing wrong?

- Everything depends on and is caused by the instructor.
- I can inspire every student to learn.

Learning

- Learning promotes resistance....
 - Basis of resistance is fear of change
 - Learning involves change

Understanding Resistance to Learning

- Don't see themselves as learners
- Fear of unknown
- Normal rhythm of learning
- Disconnect between learning and teaching styles

Understanding Resistance to Learning

- Learning activity has no meaning to student
- Level of required learning inappropriate
- Fear of looking foolish
- Tired

Understanding Resistance to Learning

- Cultural suicide
- Lack of clarity with instructions
 - Is this endless discussion a form of resistance, or is there something unclear and confusing about the task?
- Students' dislike of teachers

What can the Instructor do?

- Understand that resistance can never be completely “overcome”
 - But don’t let it wear you down!
- Try to sort out the causes for the resistance
- Is the resistance justified?

What can the Instructor do?

- Research your students
 - Most important knowledge is understanding how your students are experiencing the learning and perceiving the instructor's actions.
- Solicit feedback from students

Critical Incident Questionnaire

- At what moment in this class session did you feel most engaged with what was happening?
- At what moment in this class session today did you feel most distanced from what was happening?
- What action that anyone (instructor or student) took in this class session did you find most helpful?

Critical Incident Questionnaire

- What action that anyone (instructor or student) took in this class session today did you find most puzzling or confusing?
- What about the class session today surprised you the most? (This could be something about your own reactions to what went on, or something that someone did, or anything else that occurs to you.)

Muddiest Point

- What was the muddiest point you encountered in the material covered in class today?
 - Or
- What was the most confusing idea we addressed today?

What can the Instructor do?

- Involve former resisters
- Involve students in determining the focus of the course, when appropriate
- Use a variety of teaching methods and approaches
- Assess learning incrementally

Learning Audit

- What do I know now that I didn't know this time last week?
- What can I do now that I couldn't do this time last week?
- What could I teach others to know or do that I couldn't teach them last week?

Student Comment

Reflective Journal

- “I didn’t think that I would like doing the personal reflection; however, I really am learning so much when I have to reflect and put my thoughts onto a piece of paper. I am really learning a lot about myself!”



What can the Instructor do?

- Build a case for learning
 - Sell students on the approach, activity, assignment
- Create situations in which students succeed
- Don't push too fast
 - Encourage and positively reinforce

What can the Instructor do?

- Communicate
 - discuss teaching openly and regularly
- Admit resistance is normal
- Acknowledge the right to resist

Male Students' Responses to Feminist Classroom

- Resistance/Anger:
 - refusing to read certain literature (Sinacore, et al 2002)
 - Suggesting that diverse course content is inappropriate or worthless (J. Nadelhaft, 1985)
 - Using course evaluations to complain about feminist teachers (R. Nadelhaft, 1985)
 - Resent the instructor (Culley, 1985; Eichorn et al., 1992; J. Nadelhaft, 1985, R. Nadelhaft, 1985; Rakow, 1992)

Male Students' Responses to Feminist Classroom

- Resistance/Anger:
 - Redirect the conversation away from topics (Lewis, 1993).
 - Marginalize other students (Bell et al, 1999)
 - Create derogatory labels female colleagues (Culley, 1985)
 - Demonstrate an unwillingness to connect their own experiences with those of other oppressed groups. Frame their experiences as reality and the “others” as biased. (Bell et al, 1999).

Experience that Enlightened you the Most

- “The lack of my peers to see the female side. Often comments come up as ‘maybe that was just how she WANTED to see it.’”
- “These guys live in a male dominated career and they still refuse to see things from a different perspective.”



Remember

- Resisting students play an important role in the learning community...
 - They are instigators for growth.
 - Listening to them in the classroom provides an opportunity for growth for other students as well as the instructor.
 - As instructors, we need to create safe places for students to express emotional reactions to new material.

Resources

- Brookfield, Stephen (2006) The Skillful Teacher (2nd edition). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Angelo, Thomas & Cross, K. Patricia. (1993). Classroom Assessment Techniques (2nd edition). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Weimer, Maryellen (2002). Learner-Centered Teaching. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.