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# Teaching self-authorship and self-regulation: A story of resistance and transformation

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**Teaching Self-Authorship and Self-Regulation:**

**A Story of Resistance and Transformation**

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## Abstract

Studies show that many learners feel resistant to or otherwise under-prepared for learning challenges due to underdeveloped ability to self-regulate or adapt thoughts, feelings, and actions to attain their own personal goals. This narrative account illustrates pathways and pitfalls in evoking such behavior and encouraging self-authorship—the internal defining of beliefs, identity and relationships. The author describes a project in which an initially resistant student generated creative, if short-lived, solutions to personal struggles. Helpful educational interventions included questioning behavioral patterns, establishing high expectations, and reinforcing belief in ability to change. Oversights and missed opportunities included unintentionally inviting mimicry and remaining ignorant of researched practices for fostering transformation.

In my first years of teaching college, I had a unique experience dealing with a student I initially considered "resistant."  As a personal account, of both my student's development and my own, the story contributes to what Weimer (2006) has termed the "personal narrative" form of "wisdom-of-practice" scholarship on teaching and learning, wherein a teacher attempts to make meaning of personal experience. With the rise of qualitative research in recent decades (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), narrative has been considered "both phenomenon and method" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 416): a story is told—in this case my student's tale of transformation—and inquiry into the story is pursued in the form of another meta-narrative, or my story about the student's story.

If "imagination and feeling… makes possible the construction of new knowledge" (Ely, Vinz, Downing and Anzul, 1997, p. 78), as Bruner argued, then "in narrative thinking a writer needs to attend to two landscapes simultaneously: the outer landscape of action and the inner landscape of consciousness" (Ely, Vinz, Downing and Anzul, 1997, p. 78).  As I examine my student's actions and my own, I can not help but take a perspective on them, consciously or unconsciously. As McAdams (McAdams, 1993; McAdams, Josselson & Lieblich, 2001) found, people often tell themselves either narratives of "redemption," where they see themselves overcoming barriers and triumphing in the end, or narratives of decline or "contamination," where they see themselves suffering one or more traumas from which they never really recover. The below narrative derives its power from a student's personal report of his struggles, and my attempt to account for the process without laying only one narrative or storyline on the events that transpired.

### "I Don't Know What To Do"

It was late in the term and Colligan, a first-year accounting major in a class I was teaching on decision making, rushed into my office and collapsed into a chair. We had an appointment to confer about his making up late work and starting a term project.  I said, "So, what are you thinking of working on?" He shrugged and slumped lower in the chair, "I dunno. That's why I came to you.  I don't know what to do."  I asked, "Is there anything from class you can imagine using or working with in your life?"  His leg bounced frenetically, and he muttered, "Ugh, like sayback or empathy or something?" referring to an active listening method I had taught.  He and another student had argued that such techniques impede natural

talking.  Recalling his persistent objections to the exercise, I said, "I remember you made some really good points the group didn't get, about when sayback doesn't help."  He visibly relaxed a degree.

As Colligan sat in my office, I sensed that my focus on the class was not exactly matching his current life concerns.  I asked more generally, "Well, so, what about in your life right now—where are you at?  What's been going on?  What're you dealing with?"  He launched into a litany of problems with his classes and his job.  His overarching problem, he said, was, "I never have time to get things done."  He explained, "When I'm doing homework, the telephone rings, and I have to answer it. It's what always happens," he said. "Or my brother comes in and interrupts me. There's always something."

Ignorant at the time of research on managing such struggles, I leapt rather prematurely to try and change his behavior: "So what would you have to do differently?"  He shrugged, "That's just the way I've always been.  I've *always* been that way."  I was concerned that he seemed almost satisfied with his conclusion, as if resigned that he would never be able to change. I persisted, "When you look back on the problem, what would you have to do differently to change things?"  Eventually he said, "Well I could shut off the ringer… not answer the phone.  But I know I wouldn't do that.  It would just be bugging me, and I'd be going 'Wh-whoah who's calling me?'  Or if I let the machine pick up, I'd immediately have to check or I'd call all my friends to find out who it was."  I wanted him to shift from "That's just the way I've always been," to instead become perhaps the way he had always wanted to be, by seeing his power to choose different behaviors. Such change, however, does not come easily.

### Resistance Signifies Search for Relevance

Colligan's story matches that of other students who come to college under-prepared and needing developmental education—the special kind of support that aims to develop the "self-regulation" behaviors required for even moderately successful learning (Ley & Young, 1998; Wambach, Brothen, & Dikel, 2000; Young & Ley, 2003). "Self-regulation," as Zimmerman (2000) describes, "refers to self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions that are planned and cyclically adapted to the attainment of personal goals" (p. 14). My hope for Colligan, moreover, was not simply to inculcate self-regulation for its own sake, but to work towards the greater goal of promoting his "self-authorship" (Kegan, 1994), elaborated by Baxter Magolda (2001) to mean "the capacity [of learners] to internally define their own beliefs, identity, and relationships" (p. xvi).

Colligan was one of fifteen diverse undergraduates in an interdisciplinary Decision Making course that I taught at a mid-size private university in an urban setting, early in my teaching career.  Course content was organized around interdisciplinary "connective concepts" (Lauer, 1996-97; Torosyan, 1999; 2001) such as locus of control, perceptual bias, empathy, systems thinking, interdependence, and cause and effect—each of which crossed disciplines and was applied to real world personal, work and civic life decisions. Decision making itself was considered part of a larger critical thinking process involving cycles of perception, evaluation, decision and action (see PEDA process in Lauer, 1996-97, pp. 375-76).

A particular difficulty for Colligan was self-managing procrastination and time management—a struggle many students encounter (Dembo, 2004; Eison & Holtschlag, 1989; Kachgal, Hanse, & Nutter, 2001).  As the first generation of his working-class, Latino and Irish[1] family to attend college, he resembled many ethnically and socioeconomically diverse students who attend urban and exurban universities today. Aged 18, he was already working over 40 hours per week while attending classes. If "transformative learning" requires time-intensive critical reflection upon disorienting dilemmas (Kegan, 2000; Mezirow, 1975; 2000), then financial and other pressures facing Colligan would make realizing such personal transformation understandably difficult to achieve. His resistance to school work derived in part from a frustrated desire for relevance—for study that would matter in daily life.

To teach students like Colligan, who need help developing self-regulation, one should of course know how such students learn (Boylan, 1999; Smittle, 2003). Having taught for two years at the time, I was unfamiliar with some such research—despite my perception that about 5 to 10% of my freshmen came to college under-prepared to regulate their own performance. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 28% of all freshmen in 4-year colleges and universities and 42% of community college freshmen require remedial education (NCES, 2004). While it is typically developmental educators—instructors of remedial or learning skills courses, learning assistance professionals and academic advisors/counselors—who address such needs, all of us who teach such students share the responsibility. Colligan's story demonstrates, through my own teaching successes and oversights, distinct

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[1] A note on confidentiality: When asked in an informed consent form what pseudonym to use for him in my research, the student came up with "Colligan," an Irish moniker. To further protect confidentiality, I have removed identifying features such as when the course was offered and where it was taught.

pathways and pitfalls in evoking behavioral change—transformation of thoughts, feelings and actions to attain personal goals.

## A One-Hour Transformative Experiment

At some point during my initial exchange with Colligan, I got an idea for how we could confront his struggle to regulate himself while learning about decision making. I said:

> You want a project? I've got a project for you. We'll do a one-hour experiment.
> You're going to be in control of one hour. You'll plan out beforehand what you'll do in
> that hour. I don't care what you plan to do. You can plan on the last half hour being
> just to have fun and do what you want, call friends, surf the net, whatever. But you
> stick to the plan.

My goal in suggesting something so dramatically different from the expected student project was less the particular outcome of whether or not he actually controlled his time, and more that he sees the benefits of reflecting on his thoughts and actions. Evidence shows that such a focus on a "process goal" or small step in changing behavior, more than a final outcome goal such as the changed result or outcome, "can become intrinsically motivating in its own right and can even outweigh attainment of superordinate outcome goals (Schunk & Schwartz, 1993; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1997)" (cited by Zimmerman, 2000, p. 18). A small step such as controlling one hour can not only demonstrate capacity to change, but possibly become more engaging in itself than a more intimidating challenge like managing all of one's time.

Research also supports the general usefulness of real-world projects in helping students learn to monitor their own progress and evaluate effectiveness of their own methods (Casazza, 1998; Young & Ley, 2004). Moreover, one study shows that the one piece of class design that matters most to learning— more than choice of tasks, variety of skills required, nature of a task, or feedback from a task itself—was the significance or importance of the task and the perceived relevance to students (Nordstrom, Williams, & Jarvis, 2003). While learning for its own sake might be admirable, students need to see connections to life if they are to achieve learning that lasts.

Dewey (1938/1963) argued similarly:

> There is, I think, no point in the philosophy of progressive education which is sounder
> than its emphasis upon the importance of the participation of the learner in the formation
> of the *purposes which direct his activities* in the learning process, just as there is no
> defect in traditional education greater than its failure to secure the active co-operation of
> the pupil in construction of the purposes involved in his studying. (1938/1963, p. 67,
> emphasis mine)

The challenge, however, is to match students' purposes with our own when the two often seem diametrically opposed. Colligan's project, for example, arguably fails to engage a world of issues beyond his strictly personal concerns unless gaining control of his time better equips him to care about other things.

In my meeting with Colligan, I asked him what he heard the proposal to be. He said, curtly, "To try and control and plan one hour of my time." After a beat, he added, "If I can." I teased him, "*If* I can?" He replied, "Well you know, I can try, but I know myself, I know what'll happen." I said, "No, I'm not going to let you get away with 'If I can.' I want a commitment from you." He replied, with some understandable trepidation, "OK."

Unfortunately, unaware as I was of research on teaching for diversity, I neglected to give Colligan specific "anti-stereotype threat" messages. As Cohen, Steele & Ross (1999) have shown, minority students benefit best from critical feedback when it is preceded by explicit reminders that they are being held to high standards that challenge many others too. Furthermore, minorities need to hear that a teacher believes in their ability to do better based on the evidence of their work so far. Both such reminders, of *challenging standards* and *belief in ability*, help people who have often been socially conditioned to assume that there is something wrong with them and that they are not capable of improvement. Moreover, even majority students do better to attribute performance results less to inability or inadequacy and more to learning strategies that can be altered and tested (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1997).

**Giving Up Helping to Be the Greatest Help**

Hearing Colligan's apprehension, I felt he might be more likely to change his behavior if I changed mine. In a related spirit, the Tao Te Ching offers an aphorism:

> Nothing in the world / is as soft and yielding as water. / Yet for dissolving the hard and inflexible, / nothing can surpass it. / The soft overcomes the hard; / the gentle overcomes the rigid. / …  Because [the Master] has given up helping, / he is people's greatest help. (Mitchell, 1988, ch. 78)

Rather than push my agenda during this and future meetings, I might better "give up" helping and let him fail and falter as needed.  Moreover, as another student had told me I sometimes gave mechanically "robotic" responses, I might better "soften" and describe my own struggles.

Continuing our initial conference, I felt moved to share and disclosed, "You know when I'm trying to write a paper or do some other work, the more imposing the task is, the more interesting every surrounding distraction looks.  Especially the stuff that never looked interesting before—the stuff I've been avoiding like cleaning the bathroom, organizing my music collection, everything."  Such self-disclosure, as appropriate, aims to model "confessional consciousness" (Torosyan, 2001, p. 318) or honest cogitation upon mistakes. At my remark, Colligan laughed and smiled, possibly recognizing himself in it. I added, "The neatest thing to try is planning to let myself do that stuff too, but after I do what I planned."

After discussing the project, I asked again, "Now what did you hear me say? Just so I know I was clear," calling for empathic "say back" to confirm understanding (Torosyan, 2004-2005, p. 28). Butler (2004) has similarly emphasized effective task interpretation, and has shown that students often "do not know how to… use instructions to self-direct learning" (Butler, 2002, p. 90).  Colligan's first attempts to interpret the task were expressed minimally, "Well I'm going to plan out what I'm gonna do, then I'm gonna do it, then I'm gonna report on what I did."  I pushed, "OK, the most important part is in planning it out.  You really need to anticipate what will go wrong, knowing yourself and what you usually *tend* to do." By inviting such self-examination, I was avoiding having the student "be inadvertently excluded from the problem-solving process central to self-regulation" (Butler, 2002, p. 84).  Change should ideally come from internal agency, for, "if it is the teacher or researcher who analyzes a task, anticipates problems, and

defines useful strategies, then students have little opportunity to problem solve strategies themselves" (Butler, 2002, p. 84).

I also had a validity concern: how would I know whether he fabricated a success story? In his self-reports to date, he appeared to honestly admit "failures." He also felt free enough to object to the active listening exercise. Thus, the data indicated that I was avoiding coercing fabricated responses. But I would nevertheless need to vigilantly discourage mere parroting and instead actively recognize, affirm and welcome failures and successes alike.

### From "It Worked" to "Everything Went Wrong" to "I Stuck To It Lovely"

One week after we had conferenced, Colligan read a preliminary report of his one-hour experiment aloud to the class, and said, smiling, "I put the phone in the laundry machine, and I took the laptop out to the backyard to avoid hearing my brother and the answering machine." After battling several other temptations, he completed his work successfully, he said. The group listened intently. Colligan smiled, "It really worked." He was surprised that he really could control much of his life. When "each student determines his or her own self-study," Dembo and Seli (2004) have found that he or she "appears to be less defensive about changing his or her behavior" (p. 8). Rather than me telling him what to change, he thought of specific interventions for himself—including creative segmenting of areas of his life.

As to what exactly "worked," he went through each of the three recursive, cyclical phases of self-regulation formulated by Zimmerman (2000): 1) he used "forethought" to set goals for his hour and solidify belief in his "self-efficacy" (Bandura, 1977) or ability to do what he set his mind to, 2) he used "performance control" to imagine potential obstacles, alter his surroundings and focus his attention during his experiment, and 3) he used "self-reflection" to hone in on controllable causes such as interruptions, and to find satisfaction in even the modest outcome of a single controlled hour of time (pp. 16-24). Sharing in class also provided Colligan with a social learning opportunity to celebrate success with others.

For Colligan, however, as for most who attempt change, the new behavior did not stick. The third week of the project, he wrote in his journal, "This week I took another one hour but this time everything went wrong… my hour was bad and I did not follow all of the things I should or wanted to [sic]." He again fell prey to extrinsic forces such as phone calls and invitations from friends. I should have pressed more

for him to articulate the reasons he did not follow his plan, to check whether, as Prochaska and others (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992; Prochaska & Prochaska, 1999) suggest, a) he believed he could not change, b) he did not want to change enough, c) he did not know what to change exactly, or d) he did not know how to actually change.

When Colligan tried again in week four, he wrote, "This week I took one hour again and I really needed to stick to it." However, he concluded:

> As the hour started everything went well until MY BESTEST FRIEND MIKE CAME
>
> OVER [emphasis in original] and told me that I HAD to go out with him right there and
>
> then because he had just gotten the car for the first time from his parents and it is a
>
> very expensive nice car we have been awaiting to drive in [sic]. Well I couldn't turn up
>
> this opportunity…

Feeling as if to "turn up" an "opportunity" would be too much to bear, he again lost control. This led to a disappointed end: "I was really behind in my work and I found myself going to bed at 3 in the morning instead of at 12 like I was hoping I would." In his journal, I commented, "Good you noticed consequences here. Observant!"—in order to at least credit the habit of self-reflection and help catch him getting that much right.

By the sixth week of his project, near end of term, he finally had some success again, but his realizations appear mixed with admissions of ambivalence. He wrote in his journal, "[I tried] 1 more hour this week! Well this week I decided to do things that I wanted to do because I have always been planning to do homework and I do need to do personal things on time also." Seeing what he "wanted" to do as not inclusive of school, he continued:

> The hour started fine and everything went according to plan but what I think made it
>
> happen is because it was something I really wanted to do and therefore I stuck to it
>
> lovely [sic]. If it involves schoolwork or other boring things I don't really stick to them or
>
> something always happens to stop the flow. When I do my own personal stuff it
>
> always seems to go well and I really enjoy knowing when I have to do what I want to
>
> do everything goes well and when I have to do things on time or by a certain time it
>
> almost never happens because something always goes wrong.

By compartmentalizing "personal stuff" as his only source of pleasure, he had not identified what was valuable to him about "schoolwork," seeing the latter only as "boring."

I could have pushed Colligan more about how he framed the issues and asked "Can you find something you *want* in what appears to be only 'boring'—connect 'work' to your own interests somehow?" Such a demand for high standards is recommended by Smittle (2003). Colligan's language also indicated some circular reasoning; his words, "it almost never happens because something always goes wrong," begged the question of why things "go wrong" in the first place—as well as the question of to what he attributed his failure. As Dembo & Seli (2004) summarize attribution research, "how students perceive the causes of their prior successes and failures is the most important factor determining how they will approach a particular task and how long they will persist at it" (p. 4).

Yet Colligan's excitement—that he can "really enjoy" when "everything goes well"—could, if reframed towards other goals, motivate him to change further, on the principle that people pursue actions that bring satisfaction and avoid those that bring dissatisfaction (Bandura, 1997; Zimmerman, 2000). Colligan had, at the least, noticed not only his own pattern of repeated behavior ("something always goes wrong"), but some of the pleasure sustaining his addiction to frittering time away (in order to avoid "schoolwork or other boring things").  His expression, "I stuck to it lovely," hinted that he found serene satisfaction in having his toils lead to success.

In his final journal entries, Colligan claimed: "I really would like to thank you again for helping me organize my time and for showing me this way of doing things because my life is much more organized and now I can finish all the things I would like to finish."  While he still had yet to make schoolwork his own, in the end he celebrated his own power to "finish things"—simply to get done what he planned to do. Although he would surely suffer setbacks again, he started a path of self-observation and changed action in response.

### Limits: "It Is All Intertwined"—But Will the Change Last?

At minimum, our conference, his subsequent journal writing, and the class discussion together had begun reinforcing for Colligan three of 14 self-regulatory behaviors (Young & Ley, 2003; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1986) encouraged by master developmental instructors: 1) he used "environmental

structuring" by arranging the physical setting to make learning easier, 2) he used "self-consequences" in giving himself free time during his trial hour, thus arranging rewards for success, and 3) he repeatedly used "self-evaluation," assessing his own strategies and progress (Young & Ley, 2003, p. 4).

What seemed to help Colligan most was that my questions got him thinking through decisions for himself, encouraged him to study something directly relevant to him, and guided him in reflecting on the experience. His story illustrates what Rogers (Rogers, 1959; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994) described as a key pathway to overcome resistance, trigger change and initiate self-regulation:

> The student in the regular university course, and particularly in the required course, is
> apt to view the course as an experience in which he expects to remain passive or
> resentful or both . . .  When a regular university class does perceive the course as an
> experience they can use to resolve problems which *are* of concern to them, the sense
> of release, and the thrust of forward movement is astonishing (Rogers, 1959, p. 158).

As Colligan's ideas began to coalesce, he thrust forward, albeit in a rocky fashion. By the end of term, he perceived some of the mutual interdependence of his learning, his own actions, and his environment.

To a degree, Colligan changed his attributions of what caused—or as he put it, "what allowed"—his overall success. As he wrote:

> What I really noticed, is that this all happen [sic] or what allowed this to happen for me
> is that I made the RIGHT choices and this allowed me to have fun. I found myself
> sympathizing with people and actually taking time to think over the options and plan
> everything out like I did for my project with you Roben.  Everything I have learned is
> just adding on and it is all intertwined.

While it was unclear what made choices "right," he claimed at least to gain some mastery over aligning action with intention. By "actually taking time to think," he located his sense of control more intrinsically, feeling less subject to extrinsic circumstances or "what always happens," as he had earlier. In "sympathizing with people" he may have more mindfully connected with others and avoided feeling continually distracted by worries about time pressures. His awkward use of "sympathizing" could, however, suggest he was merely mimicking my emphasis on "empathizing."

Colligan was likely helped by the fact that his experience was reinforced content-wise by the course concept of systems thinking—the idea that one can never do or decide just one thing ("the RIGHT choices"), but rather, decisions and actions always have multiple consequences ("everything… adding on") requiring further processing ("actually taking time to think over the options"). Furthermore, his many new behaviors had a synergistic effect, with the whole of his transformation being more than the mere sum of the separate parts of reading, reflecting, taking action and writing. His use of the language of "intertwined" learning was more articulate than usual for him too, and suggested another moment of excited transformation—albeit a change that might not last.

Writing further, Colligan reminded himself, "I also want to do so much this summer and I think it will only happen if I plan everything out."  As he concluded in his final journal entry:

> I must plan this alllllll [sic] out and I am repeating myself so it can sink into my head
>
> and so I CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN!!!!!!!!!
>
> [emphasis in original]

Aware that he "repeated" his strategy to himself, he engaged in inner talk, as if to talk himself into really changing patterns. At the same time, his emphatic tone hinted at a certain desperation, as if he knew too that he would inevitably slip back and falter. Such recursive iterations of progress and inevitable regress can, even with more life experience, discourage many an excited learner. As Cranton (2002) has theorized, transformative learning usually shows not linear but "spiral-like" progression (p.65).

Factors contributing to Colligan's progress may include two of five actions Smittle (2003) recommends faculty take to help developmental students: 1) I adjusted to the "affective need" for help to "regain motivation" and to identify "everyday activities" (p. 12) by breaking down time management into small steps; 2) I created a relatively "open and responsive learning environment" for Colligan and other students, "recognizing them as individuals" (p. 12) by calling people by name and personalizing comments. I might have had greater success had I practiced what Smittle (2003) proposes as a first principle—that faculty should "commit to teaching under-prepared students… [by] gaining knowledge of [developmental] learning problems" (p. 11).

I was unaware of several other models for evoking behavioral change in developmental learners—each of which the story illustrates. Colligan's process unintentionally matched the four steps of

the POME model (Young & Ley, 2004) for under-prepared students. He "Prepared" the environment by removing obstacles/distractions (such as phone calls); my course helped him "Organize" or transform decision making material (assignments allowed him and others to question and apply reading); he "Monitored" progress (logging in his journal what actually happened, not just reflective evaluations or impressions); and he "Evaluated" effectiveness (through his written conclusions).  A similar lens on Colligan's journey is provided in case studies by Dembo and Seli (2004), whose related cyclical four steps track Colligan's path to transformation—from self-observation (though his journals), to goal setting (in conference with me), strategy implementation (his actually following through on plans) and strategic outcome monitoring (his reflections upon when things "worked" and when "everything went wrong"). Likewise Colligan in effect proceeded through Butler's (2002) Strategic Content Learning activities of a) analyzing tasks (in our initial conversation), b) developing personalized strategies (his own creative tactics such as hiding the phone), and c) monitoring strategy effectiveness, revising aims or efforts adaptively (his renewing efforts after regressing).

Overall, Colligan's turnaround towards self-reflection, relative to his dependent state at start of term, appeared significant and dramatic.  For change to last, however, students need "a [self-regulation] toolbox that they can carry with them, rather than something that will carry them" (Young & Ley, 2003, p. 10). Another of the study's limits, in addition to concerns about the validity of Colligan's self-reports, is a lack of longitudinal data on whether Colligan internalized learning very long after the course was over.

In addition, a particular trade-off of allowing Colligan so much freedom was that he missed a chance to synthesize research in a traditional term paper. My focus after all was not on having him read and analyze decision making theory in any greater depth. However, as a colleague with whom I shared Colligan's story concluded at the time, "At first I was worried you're almost giving him less of an assignment than writing a term paper.  But actually, he's learning something that he really needs to practice.  It's probably one of the hardest things he'll ever have to do.  He'll learn so much from it."  As issues like time management hinder content learning so much in the first place, the benefits of allowing a self-directed project outweighed the costs in terms of content coverage as it is often conceived traditionally.

Nevertheless, several key questions for further pursuit remain—namely: What place is there for work on self-regulation in science, technology, engineering or math courses? Similarly, what principles can be integrated into other disciplines where content initially reveals little if any directly personal relevance? In addition, how can longitudinal data help show what makes learning and transformation last for an extended time, throughout life's failures and setbacks?

## Conclusions and Cross-Disciplinary Recommendations

Given the degree to which personally relevant projects such as Colligan's can generate intrinsic motivation and critical reflection, related work can be assigned across the disciplines—and at only limited expense of content. With resistant or under-prepared developmental learners, faculty can help students connect course content with students' own narrowly personal but often age-appropriate concerns. In economics, for instance, students may examine how changing supply and demand curves affect the price of hot-ticket items in their market demographic. Calculus students obsessed with car-racing videogames may create visual displays of their own best acceleration and deceleration curves. Students of art history can inspect popular fashion ads for evidence of sexualization or cultural bias, or more positively, of metaphysical significance.  Whether focused on self-regulation or not, such projects—while requiring some imagination to link to disciplinary foundations—can release transformative energy because they capitalize on what students love and care about.

Additional pedagogical assumptions and actions may better facilitate development of students like Colligan than traditional methods do.  Other potentially useful principles, induced from Colligan's story, include:

*Meet the other where they are:*

- Go "meta": Body language, tone, and other signals from students tell us when they need something dramatically different from business as usual in the classroom.
- Catch them getting it right. Affirm even minimal self-reflection to build the habit.

*Moving from prodding and coercion to collaboration and facilitation:*

- Focus on not only whether students do enough work, but also how to creatively evoke their interest and insight into solving their own problems. Help students design projects of genuine and deep concern to them.

- When brainstorming with students, avoid telling how to solve their problems, and instead get them to lay out steps for arriving at solutions themselves.

*Moving from foundational content and concepts to application, action and personal change:*

- Press for what students might do differently the next time in a similar situation.

- In the face of ambivalence, ask for and expect commitment. Model excellence and self-respect by respecting one's own expectations as a teacher, and likewise encouraging students to do *themselves* honor through persistence.

*Modeling learning from mistakes—and rewarding it:*

- Make occasional critical self-disclosures, to model reflective consciousness of one's own lapses.

- When communicating, ask for acknowledgment of precisely what they understood, to prevent misunderstandings early on.

- To ensure validity of student response, ask for and invite accounts of what does *not* work for them.

*Shifting emphasis from extrinsic to intrinsic sources of motivation and reward:*

- Create opportunities for students to celebrate successes and work on failures together.

- Follow up on student initiatives with journals, emails, meetings and class discussions.

- Try to identify pleasures that sustain addictive behaviors, and see if alternate pleasures can be found.

- "Go *with*."  Share students' exaltation and excitement, even when one has reservations.  Later, after acknowledging and building trust, one can differ and be heard.

A unifying theme for Colligan's story is that "the goal is for students to learn *how to* construct strategies independently" (Butler, 2002, p. 91, emphasis in orig.). One pathway to such independence is to develop not only trust between student and teacher, but trust of students in themselves and their own reasoning. As the Tao Te Ching advises:

> When they lose their sense of awe, / people turn to religion. / When they no longer trust
>
> themselves, / they begin to depend upon authority. / Therefore the Master steps back /
>
> so that people won't be confused. / He teaches without teaching, / so that people will
>
> have nothing to learn. (Lao-tzu, 1992, ch. 72)

The Taoist way is to point people to their inner resources for self-monitoring. Professors too can teach

without teaching, or "with your mouth shut" (Finkel, 2000; Torosyan,2001), by creating conditions that

help students ultimately decide whether or how to transform.

To help anyone else, however, we need to self-monitor and consider our own strategies for

helping. Examining the process of reflection I used in producing this narrative itself, I notice at least five

dimensions that may aid others in reflecting similarly on their own teaching experiences. Building on

Lauer's (1996-97) five-stage theory of development, I think of the following five aspects as lenses on

reality that we need to use all the time—more than stages we proceed through hierarchically.

The first dimension involves sensation. The moment Colligan entered my office, for example, I

had a felt sense of his anxiety as well as my own compulsion to solve his problems for him. A second

dimension involves categorizing those sensations and perceptions. Labelling Colligan's behaviors as

"hyper," "beleaguered" or "resistant," I named what I thought was going on—his preoccupation with

deeper problems, my interest in making the project relevant to his concerns, and so on. At a third

dimension, I weigh the relative trade-offs, fit and context of each such label by, for instance, comparing

Colligan's behaviors with those of self-authorship and self-regulation.

At a fourth dimension, I 'go meta' and reflect on the very paradigms of thinking I use in weighing

or relating categories of sensation in the first place. In quantum physics, gravity is considered not a force

that draws objects together through space, but rather a space-time continuum that wraps itself like a

blanket around the objects, giving us the perception that masses are attracted to one another. Stepping

back for similar perspective, I think outside the box of each story I try to make of Colligan's experience

and my own. For instance, I examine skeptically his claim to have redeemed himself, as well as my own

attempts to tease out how valid and reliable such claims may or may not be. Even writing this paragraph

on my process of reflection, I examine my subjective framing of the narration—the fact that I limit my

reflection to a process of five dimensions, focus on my successes or failures, and otherwise organize my description.

With a fifth dimension, I step back from the process of reflecting upon thinking and towards unifying the separation between things, thinking, and something larger. In physics, an "undivided wholeness" (Bohm, 1980; Bohm & Hiley, 1993) underlies the seeming separation of objects; even electrons are not so much particles as smears that defy categorization as either mass or energy. Attempting to integrate myself and Colligan similarly, I try to see us both as fellow human beings encountering each other and the world. Together the teacher and the learner switch roles and are part of a seamless continuity, as is common in currents of mysticism, Taoism, alternative medicine and other nontraditional attempts to balance body, mind and spirit.

Such dimensions can be applied by other teachers to similar struggles with change and so-called resistance. We can only support students if we sensitize ourselves to the sometimes subtle signals that arise in individuals and in groups as a whole. Noticing a learning problem also requires awareness of what one labels a problem in the first place. We need to compare and contrast alternatives, weighing tradeoffs when we challenge or support learners. Those very comparisons need to be unpacked for the assumptions we use in coming up with them. And all the while, we do well to remember our common humanity—something I easily forget when I perceive a student as resisting my best intentions.

In these ways, Colligan's story suggests that personal freedom to learn, combined with a teacher's coaching the process along by using sensitivity, diagnosis, theorizing, self-examination and human connection, can begin to change lives. Or if not, then such practices may at minimum jumpstart a process of reflection on the inevitable failures that attend any attempt at significant life change.

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