

Learning through silent reflection: a skill to be practiced by medical students.

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“We do not learn by experience, we learn by reflecting on experience” -John Dewey

The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery. - Mark Van Dore

In a setting of large group teaching, there is a need for encouraging active learning. Students may be involved individually, or in pairs or in small groups. Silent reflection is one of the Ideas for Active Learning in Large Groups.¹

This is where students are given a few minutes to think about a problem or issue.

They are made to write down their thoughts or ideas on a note pad. The task has to be specific. Few people who have adapted this habit, consider it to be a life improvement skill. Why can't we involve our students to learn and practice this skill?

Initially when we try to introduce this skill, students may react with a blank face.²

This method of reflection builds trust in students and improves teacher student relationship. This could be done at the end of a term or completion of a topic/ chapter.²

This is not a onetime practice and needs to be done at regular intervals.²

Silent reflection looks at /reveals the behaviour and interest of students in addition to knowing how well the student is learning. It also helps student to examine their work habits and set goals.²

How is it done.²

Allot at least 10 minutes of time for silent reflection.²

Explain the purpose of silent reflection: how it is beneficial for them.²

Each student may be given a printed booklet for periodic recording their reflection.²

The questions are projected in the classroom and students are asked to read and seek clarification if required.²

The questions should be simple and straightforward.²

Examples: 2 First term of the student/ completion of a

topic: 1. I think I liked this class because...

2. Some new things I learned are...

3. I am really proud of myself for...

4. Something I wish I learnt differently is...

5. Working in the practical laboratory writing the record...

6. Three specific goals I have for me to do during the next term are...

2nd term:

1. I really enjoy this class because...

2. Something I really do not like about this class is...

3. The most interesting thing that we did this term/topic was...

4. I really improved this last couple of weeks by

5. I think the cardiovascular chapter is going to be...

6. Something new I have found out about myself and my learning is...

7. Looking back at my goals for the past term, I ...

8. Three goals I have for me to do during the next term are....

As the students go into the last term of the course they should finish up strong and achieve their goals which fulfils their future needs

Teachers who promote reflective classrooms and guide students, in the habits of reflection, are like “facilitator of meaning making”³

If we want students to get in the habit of reflecting deeply on their work and if we want them to use Habits of Mind such as applying past knowledge to new situations, thinking about thinking (metacognition), and remaining open to continuous learning we must teach them strategies to derive rich meaning from their experiences.³

Students are helped by reflective teachers to pause, look back and think what they have been doing and what do they learn by doing a particular activity.³

Such students know they can produce personal insight and learn from all their experiences.³

Teachers use discussions, interviews, questioning,

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logs and journals and many other strategies to guide students through a period of reflection.³

Silence in the classroom not only facilitates reflection, but also conveys empathy, helps expression of feelings, challenges students to take responsibility and even take time for teachers to think of what to do next if the lesson has taken an unexpected turn.

Let us start making our students reflect, and see what magic happens in the class!!

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