

Training Tutors in Emotional Intelligence & Preparing for Emotional Sessions

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Preparing for Emotional Sessions

“For some, deciding to “be tutored” is not simply scheduling time in a busy day before turning in a paper. It’s an act of will that engages the stomach and the heart, which is churning with uncertainty and fear, and the heart, which is hopeful that the paper conveys something true” (Mills 1).

Being evaluated

- The student may feel intense fear of being evaluated and judged by writing associates, especially if they have been negatively criticized in the past.
- We must remind ourselves of how difficult the writing process can be, especially when coupled with the fear of criticism (Mills 2).

When the Paper is Personal

How should a tutor address the contents of a paper when the writing reveals secrets, confusions, and anxieties of the writer?

- Developing a clear goal for the session can distance the student from delicate subject matter, and help stay focused (Angostinelli, Poch, Santoro).
- “Some students don’t want your sympathy; they just want help with their writing” (Hongis).

Guys, Gals, and Tears

- Properly handling a crying student is a task that everyone is capable of, regardless of gender.
- If a student becomes physically emotional, it is best to allow them to explain their frustration, or to let them take a break and come back to the session.
 - Avoid constantly redirecting them to their topic, as it may irritate them further (Mills 3).

Learning Together

- Learn from the experience of other tutors, and from your own observations.
- Anger, stress, anxiety- The three most frequent and troublesome emotions that exist in appointments (Mills 4).
 - Talk with others about how they have approached such emotions in the writing center!

Ways to Respond

- Determine the intensity of the emotion, react accordingly.
 - Respond with empathy and professionalism (Mills 4).

Training Tutors in Emotional Intelligence: Toward a Pedagogy of Empathy

Daniel Goleman's 5 Aspects of Emotional Intelligence

1. Ability to recognize a feeling as it *happens*
 - Look for body language that signals the student being distanced, stressed, or upset.
2. Ability to soothe oneself so as to manage distress
 - Take a moment to relax YOURSELF, stay calm and collected.
3. Ability to “marshal emotions in the service of a goal”
4. Ability to empathize or “attune to the subtle social signals that indicate what others need/ want”
 - They may not want your sympathy or questioning, but rather to work on their writing.
5. Ability to “manage emotions in others” in order to create an effective relationship (Goleman).

Managing Emotionally Distraught Students

- Emotionally charged sessions can have detrimental effects on both the tutor and tutee's efforts- making it important to recognize signs early on.
- We do not have the responsibility of qualified therapists. Therefore, responding to an emotional writer does not need to mirror a therapy session.
 - Instead, recognize, embrace, and respect the dignity and emotions of all individuals (Lape 2).

Managing Angry and Frustrated Students

- May appear as defensive, frustrated, embarrassed.
- Press at the “core message”.
 - Use the formula, “you feel... because...”
 - Validate their frustrations, but do not mirror them (Lape 4).

The Power of Empathy

- “Many people just want to feel important and listened to... some people may act difficult if they feel hopeless or powerless” (Lape 6).
- Empathy and trust are a two way street, they build upon one another to motivate learning (Lape 6).

Ways to Practice

- Roleplay
- Observation and discussion
- Reflective journaling (Lape 7).

*****IMPORTANT*****

“Training” for emotional sessions is a difficult medium. To reiterate, none of us are trained therapists. Therefore, it is important to remember to do our very best in each individual session and treat each student with equal amounts of decency and empathy.