

SUMMARY NOTES ART OF DOCTORING SESSION 1 RUCKER 9/30/03

A introduced session (11 out of 15 participants; 3 had emailed inability to attend; 1 new student)

- Transitions and how to cope with them
 - Take a breath
 - Take another breath, this time releasing all stress, strain, worries, and thoughts from previous activities
 - Setting an intention
 - Rather than stumble mindlessly into transition, use it as a cue for setting an intention
 - Example of gratitude for this space to pause and reflect
- * B made the point that another way to think about this is to focus in the moment; business example of giving complete attention to the task-at-hand, and let the big picture take care of itself (A commented on influence of Buddhist/Taoist philosophy on B-schools; convergence of similar principles)

A asks for feedback on assignment

- C comments how difficult environment (Pediatrics – dd kids “like missiles”) negatively influences her to be more anxious, less organized – notes coping strategy of detachment, objectivity, focusing on clinical symptoms; “parents don’t want a doctor who’s overwhelmed by their child’s problem”
- D comments that his experience with demented Alzheimer’s patients made it easier to cope with his grandmother in a nursing home (post-stroke?)
 - Discussion as to why this helped: symptoms more familiar, less frightening; D felt he had better ways of interacting with grandmother that he’d learned on Psych
 - B asked if D felt better from a professional perspective toward grandmother, but perhaps had lost something personally; this question not directly answered
- E comments on two preceptors, one emphasizes talking/connecting with patients, other emphasizes efficiency
 - Notes her difficulty with “efficient” preceptor; not her “personal style”
 - Discussion of acceptance of all kinds of teachers
 - Importance of recognizing own values
 - F picks up on last point, reiterates that being true to your values is important regardless of environment or situation; it’s what will make you satisfied in your work at the end of the day
- * G comments that when he’s struggling with a clinical situation, it helps to demonstrate what we agreed to call “compassionate curiosity,” i.e., coming from a place of compassion and caring, to try to understand more deeply what’s happening
 - * “Tell me more;” “Help me understand”
 - * Notes this calms him down

* Discussion of how to respond when negative surprises occur (student thinks is doing a good job, getting the appropriate information, then patient bursts into tears, or says something that doesn't fit)

* First, explored the feelings that arise (panic, anxiety, fear, guilt) and noted that these feelings are all focused on self, not patient

* Discussion of how to work with these feelings

* Reconnect with one's center: calm down, take a breath, remind oneself of one's values

* Change focus from self to patient, through compassionate curiosity

B – go around the group, sharing “one good thing,” “one thing that student would like to do differently”

- H – listened well; wasn't sure exactly what this meant; thought it had something to do with not having too high expectations for the patient
- E – gave example of not using power-over with a patient to coerce a history, but negotiated a flexible interaction that restored some of patient's sense of control
- I and J both talked about being present, staying focused in the moment as a way of improving their interactions with patients; some discussion about the difficulty of staying in the present, tendency of mind to wander, and the importance of practice
- A couple of students (K, J) mentioned that “feeling good about themselves” or “doing a good job” was closely correlated to positive feedback from attendings or residents, performing well, doing a good case presentation
- G noted that detachment and objectivity “didn't work” for him, and that when he was having trouble with a patient he sometimes made a personal disclosure, sharing something of himself
- L commented that she sometimes reflected on her patients outside of work, thinking about better questions to ask them
- B commented on possible confusion of the assignment: clarified that our intention was to get students to think about when they did a “good job” in terms of acting in a compassionate, empathic manner

B shifts discussion: asks people to describe whether they actually did the assignments in written form. I comments that he followed the assignment to the letter, noting a numerical score for both “work” and “feeling” each day, as well as identifying both a “positive” and “negative” experience. He found the numbers helpful in providing an orienting point. C had also used the numbers and found them helpful. F had done fairly consistent journaling, and had found it extremely helpful. H commented that he'd “thought about” scores for himself each day, but usually while driving home. Other students commented similarly.

A commented on her own difficulty in journaling, but added that it had superior value to “thinking about” an issue because it was less ruminative, clearer, more focused, and brought one closer to the issue. B emphasized the value of actually doing the writing, and

stressed that to get the most out of the elective, students should engage in writing. He recommended that students continue the assignment in between now and the next group meeting.

B encouraged students to pay attention to, and write about, where they found themselves on the continuum between emotional detachment/objectivity and emotional “overwhelm.”

A summarized key points of the session, and invited students to think about the ones they found most interesting or potentially useful, and to try them out between now and the next session. B commented that students should have the last word because this was really their group. A reiterated B’s earlier point about choosing supportive environments, and pointed out that by participating in this elective, the students were doing precisely that. A encouraged students to act as a “virtual” group in between actual sessions, and give each other a smile, a hug when needed. A also encouraged students to use email to communicate thoughts, ideas, feelings with each other and with faculty facilitators if desired. Students did have the last word (A bit her tongue).