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Statement of Teaching Philosophy

“People don’t buy what you do, they buy why you do it” – Simon Sinek

Consumers respond more positively to messaging that explains the motivation and goals behind the development of a product, rather than an advertising campaign about the product itself.¹ The phrase “start with the why” indicates how conveying the purpose, cause, or belief driving the creation of the product needs to come first in presenting a new idea (Figure 1). After learning this principle, I applied it in my personal life, and I incorporated into my teaching practices.

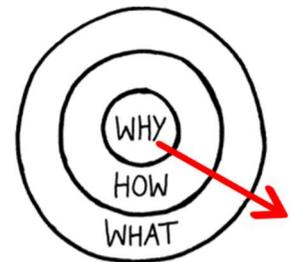


Figure 1 Simon Sinek's Golden Circle

The main tenet of my teaching philosophy is explaining the “why” whenever I interact with students and my audience. The purpose of using this framework is not to “sell” the content I am presenting per se, but rather sell the idea of engagement in the learning process. I feel strongly about taking time at the beginning of class to go over the importance of the topic and verbalizing the “why do we care” (Figure 2). In doing so, I aim to explain the value added for any given new material. Rooted in the goal orientation theory, I have seen how this method has positively impacted class discussions by increasing active participation and motivating students not simply to demonstrate but more importantly develop competence.²

The goal of developing competence is of fundamental importance in the profession of pharmacy. One of the principles of the Code of Ethics for Pharmacists states that individuals in this field must maintain professional competence as they have a duty to keep up with knowledge on new advances in healthcare. Hence, pharmacy students need to become life-long learners and these practices ought to be cultivated in the classroom. In teaching, I not only raise the issue of value, but I also aim at putting the material into an applicable and relevant context with direct implications for patient care. I applied these principles in the Evidence Based Pharmacy PharmD class where I had the opportunity to lead class discussions on study methods and patient safety concepts. Reminding students of the role they play as gatekeepers once they are out in the real world made them more engaged in learning the content and utilize their critical thinking skills. While study design and methods might not have appealed to some, students were able to grasp complicated concepts and gained the skills necessary to make their own interpretation based on the evidence presented to them in a paper.

Just like optimizing pharmacotherapy for patients should not follow a cookie-cutter approach, students learning styles are not homogenous. I use different methods to communicate my message to appeal to different learning styles. For example, I integrate graphic representations of complicated concepts and relevant audiovisual



Figure 2 Introductory slide. “Medication Misadventures” (Lecture – Evidence Based Pharmacy Class)

elements to reinforce central notions. Similarly, I believe it is important to incorporate case studies and current news relevant to the topic being discussed to continue emphasizing the “why.” I like presenting opposing viewpoints on an issue as it helps students go beyond the face value of the content and dig deeper into the material. I have included debate-format discussions in class as I find them effective at elucidating high class participation (e.g. I held a debate on the motion of legalizing recreational use of drugs in America for my Drugs in Society elective class). In preparing all class materials, I am a strong advocate of careful and diligent planning. Having had several teaching roles in the UF college of pharmacy, which has a strong emphasis on distance education, I have developed managing skills to coordinate a smooth and consistent delivery of content. In addition, the use of technology at all points of the learning process has been central and indispensable on my teaching practices. For example, I made use of polling software in classes to engage all students in the discussion at hand and to gauge the collective knowledge and preparation for class.

I am a strong believer that audiences feed off the energy of the presenter. I strive to demonstrate a positive and caring attitude in the way I communicate and build rapport with my students in the classroom. Students must feel their professors are truly invested in their development and truly care for their well-being. Only with the latter approach, I think students will be inspired to become the best version of themselves. I also believe that it is fundamental as a teacher to instill the feeling of accountability. To pharmacy students, I emphasize that patient safety is at stake and that each interaction can alter the course of health outcomes significantly. To graduate students, I emphasize that accountability comes in the form of ensuring their studies follow a proper methodology which leads to scientifically sound evidence and being cognizant of the implications of their research findings on policy and practice. I have made it my goal to continuously challenge mentees and peers on the real-world application and significance of their studies and use this principle as the foundation to inform their research plan.

Based on the feedback from my advisors and student evaluations, my teaching strategies are effective and well-received. I was fortunate and honored to not only receive the College of Pharmacy Teaching Assistant of the Year by the Graduating PharmD Class of 2016 but also a University-wide Graduate Student Teaching Award. My teaching activities outside those from my responsibilities in the College of Pharmacy have included guest lectures on prescription drug abuse to undergraduate students and facilitation of small group discussions for a year-long class on interdisciplinary health at the UF Health Science Center. I consider it both an immense privilege and responsibility to be part of a student’s path to professional development and competence building. By helping individuals realize the “Why,” I am confident students can bridge the gap to the “What” not only during their time in academia, but in their life-long learning process.

References:

1. Sinek, S. (2009). *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*. New York, NY: Penquin Publishers.
2. Kaplan, A. & Maehr M. L. (2007). The Contributions and Prospects of Goal Orientation Theory. *Educ Psychol Rev*, 19, 141–184