

Nursing Education Section

Principles of Teaching

Report of lecture given by Mr. Baldev Bhatia

(Continued from February Journal)

The Principle of Activity

A second principle for the teacher to remember is that learning is an active process. There has to be activity of some kind—physical or intellectual. With children much learning activity has to be physical. They learn by touching, tasting, smelling, moving and physically going through actions, as well as by seeing and hearing. With adolescent and adult students mental activity is more important. They have had sufficient experience to be able to understand and visualize mentally, without going through every step, physically. They do not need a visual aid with every concept. They are well-able to learn from the abstract expression of ideas. The important thing with them is that the teacher should be able to encourage their questions and mental activity. Much may be accomplished by good questioning, or by discussion step-by-step. Assignments are also a means to this end.

The Principle of Connecting with Life

Another principle important to remember with adolescent and adult learners, is that they are anxious to learn how to deal with the practical problems important in their own every-day life, individual life or professional life. They are keenly interested in their future and philosophical ideas. They are intensely interested in learning about their own bodies, about diseases and what to do in illness, and of how to adjust to life's problems. In teaching nursing we can utilize this liking for the practical life situations and

problems. The subject matter of our teaching is especially suited to the needs of this age group.

The Principle of Clarity and Concreteness

With the child we need to use charts, maps, pictures, models and visual and other sensory aids at every step of teaching. We need to appeal to the eye constantly because the child has had limited experience of life. With the adult student we can appeal to the inner eye. Verbal illustrations are extremely useful. There is much clarity and concreteness got from the verbal illustrations or examples. But where there has been no experience, or where language is a block, we can make use of visual aids and actual experience to clarify the meaning of words and so make the abstract concept concrete. Once the concept is established we do not have to go on and on showing pictures of the same thing to make it concrete. The verbal illustration provides the quick mental flash of understanding. The Chinese proverb says "One picture is worth ten thousand words". Similarly the verbal example or illustration is worth many thousand words. With adults it is possible to take this short-cut.

The Principle of Patience, Sympathy and Kindness

The post-adolescent and young adult student has a special need for patience so that we may understand her difficulties. She needs sympathy and kindness at the hands of her teachers. Sentiment and emotionality are not enough. There is a great need for a sense of security, a sense

of being together and not alone. We need to avoid nagging, scolding, sarcasm and ridicule. These will only raise resistance and result in negative reactions and habits. It is important to try to understand the difficulty of the student. This does not imply lenience, but it means sympathy, justice and fairness. She needs to feel that you understand her and are with her in feeling her difficulty, even when you are very firm. Always correct her in private, and especially not in front of patients, relatives, doctors or others.

The Principle of Responsibility for what is Taught

As teachers, not only do we need to keep up standards of student work, but we have the responsibility for giving accurate and correct information ourselves. We need to feel responsibility for what we write and say. If we make mistakes we need to admit them. If we don't know or are not sure, we need to say so. We can say we will look it up or will help find the correct or exact or more detailed explanation.

The Principle of Cooperation and Suggestion in Learning

The teacher and learner need to cooperate in order to aid learning. All the socialized methods of teaching have come into being because of this principle. If the teacher is to succeed, it is by the power of suggestion not command. There is no teaching without learning. The socialized methods use suggestion to motivate and seek to bring about joint working on a problem. Because some are working, others are more apt to work too. What cannot be accomplished separately by teacher or learner is shown to be possible by joint effort or team work.

The Principle of Democratic Teaching

The principle of democracy in teaching refers to intellectual democracy—respecting the student as an individual and for her intellectual powers. Each student needs attention and respect. The atmosphere for learning should be one of

give-and-take, co-operation, sharing and respect for the individual as an individual. It is hard for us to understand this gentleness sometimes. We may take it as weakness. We are shocked by the behaviour of students to their teachers. I remember such instances of seeming disrespect in the presence of a teacher. Boys were allowed to put their feet up—sit relaxed—and talk as if in a family, in the presence of the teacher. At first I could not understand this, taking it to be terrible disrespect, and also a weakness on the part of the teacher. Then I began to see that among these boys there were none of the serious problems—strikes and more serious types of moral difficulty. They had no need to seek attention or satisfaction in unacceptable conduct. I began to see also a very real two-way respect between the boys and their teacher, not the humble docility that we are used to.

If our students are to live in a democracy, and our country has chosen this path, they need to become intellectually responsible, able to think and decide for themselves, but with respect for other people's thoughts and decisions.

The Principle of Diagnostic and Remedial Teaching

All the while we are teaching, we need to be alert to find out student abilities and needs, not just those of one or one group, but all the varying talents and needs of each learner. Our teaching must then strive to meet the needs of those very different abilities and difficulties. We need to consider the special needs, not only of weak students, or of average students or of exceptional students, but of all. Here much can be done through assignments, individual work and use of socialized methods. Each student should be encouraged to find out her own strong and weak points, and to view with her own past efforts. She needs to learn to evaluate her own work. We need to discover the strong points in each of our students, not just spend all our time on the weaknesses or difficulties though help is needed there also.

The Principle of Intellectual Liberation

Finally, one of the most important teaching principles to remember is that we should strive to help the student to liberate her own energies. We want to develop initiative, the habit of independent thinking, self-reliance, and the ability to do sustained independent work. Good teaching always liberates the mind. Let us try, as teachers, to give this greatest of all freedoms to our students, and help them to fulfil their greatest potentialities.

To sum up, we need to study our students and the needs of their age-group in order to catch their interest and make them want to learn. We want our students' minds to be active. We want to link their learning with real life situations. We want them to acquire

crystal-clear, concrete pictures in the mind of what they learn. In order to give the sense of security and support needed in adolescence and post-adolescence, we need to be patient, sympathetic and kindly, avoiding ridicule and sarcasm or correction in front of patients or outsiders which only stirs resistance. As teachers, we need to be intellectually conscientious about what we teach so that the learner gets correct information only. Because there is no teaching without learning we must suggest and work with the student to help him be active. Because we live in a democracy, we must respect our students as individuals, and respect their minds. If we can help to liberate the mental and intellectual energies of our students we are performing the greatest of our functions as teachers.

Nursing Education News

Delhi

From Miss A. Cherian, President, Delhi State Branch.—

"Our Sister Tutor or Nursing Education Section at the College of Nursing started very informally when Sister Tutors from different hospitals met at a tea party in 1953. It was decided right then to meet once a month on a Saturday afternoon, to have, no fees and no written notices. A chairman and minute secretary were elected. Each member showed great determination to work for nursing education and professional growth."

"Since then we have met regularly, and have had meetings by invitation at every hospital and Nursing School from which the members of our group come, including Palwal in a neighbouring state. We now number 21 members, and our average attendance is 14-18 members. We have invited Matrons and Ward Sisters to special meetings where everybody needed to work together on a project. We set no time limit to our

meetings and sometimes the meeting has lasted four hours! But everytime we meet with great interest and leave with the feeling of achievement."

"One of our biggest achievements has been the production of a Physics and Chemistry Manual, a third edition of which we are preparing at the moment. With Matrons and Ward Sisters, we have lately been working on suggested outlines for Ward Teaching in Medical Nursing, Surgical Nursing and Paediatric nursing. Members are already talking about the next project. Our new chairman is Miss Das, Sister Tutor, Irwin Hospital, and our secretary is Miss Bose, Sister Tutor, Lady Hardinge Hospital."

"Well, we are an active group and we hope more nursing education groups will form all over India and enjoy working together for Nursing Education just as we do!"

Punjab

From Mr. H.B. Joshi, Branch Secretary, State Branch.—

"The Nursing Education Group in this