

Handout #1: Humanizing Strategies to Implement in your Classroom

Adapted from: Pacansky-Brock, M. (2020). How to humanize your online class, version 2.0 [Infographic]. <https://brocansky.com/humanizing/infographic2>

Teaching is a practice of continual improvement. When we teach a face to face, blended, hybrid, online, no matter the modality, we may have a clear sense of the type of experience we want to cultivate for our students, but we may lack the clear, practical steps to get there. These are some humanizing elements that are offered as starting points for you to help support humanized teaching and the success of marginalized students.

1. **Initial Survey.** *I want to know how to support you.* In Week One, have students complete a Getting to Know You survey, so they can get points for and get confidence of doing something right away. The survey provides the instructor with important information about learners' individualized needs. Make sure students know that their survey responses are for the instructor's eyes only and will help the instructor support them throughout the course with what they choose to share. Some of the questions can include:
 - “What’s your preferred first name?”
 - “Can you give me any tips for pronouncing it?”
 - “What’s your preferred gender pronouns?” A couple of favorite questions include:
 - “In one word, tell me how you’re feeling about this course” and
 - “Share one thing that you think might interfere with your success in this course.” And these two last questions lead into the next practice.
2. **Warm, Wise Feedback.** *I believe you can do this, and I am here to help.* Your feedback is critical to your students' continuous growth. However, how you deliver that feedback really makes a difference in any classroom. To support continued development and mitigate the effects of social and psychological threat, you can follow the Wise feedback model (Cohen & Steele, 2002) that also supports growth mindset (Dweck, 2007). Support effort + ability + action. And deliver your feedback message in voice or video to include verbal or nonverbal cues and minimize misinterpretation.
 - Wise Feedback = Support Effort + Ability + Action
3. **Self-Affirming Ice Breaker.** *Your values and experiences matter.* Often, activities are at its highest in week one of a course. To remedy this, invite participants to participate in a low-stakes ice breaker that encourages sharing about something important to them. This real-world connection reduces stress, prepares them to engage in course content, and enables them to discover shared interests with their peers. Example prompts:
 - Share a photograph of something important to you and discuss why you chose it.
 - If you could only keep two items with you for the next month, what would they be and why?
 - Share your goals and aspirations with us.
 - Use an asynchronous voice or video tool for an added humanizing kick.

4. **Humanized Home Page.** *You are welcome here.* Ensure that your students are greeted with a clear, friendly home page when they arrive in your classroom. Also include the following things on your home page:
 - A visual banner
 - A brief video that welcomes and tells students how to proceed
 - A clear “start here” button that links to the first module
5. **Liquid Syllabus.** *I will be a partner in your learning.* Pre-course contact is a important today in education. How can we do that better? How can we humanize pre-course contact? So many students today are using their phones for getting pre-course contact email messages. What if in an email, on their phone, had the option to click and open a fully public liquid syllabus that is designed with a website tool that is not a PDF and is not locked inside a learning management system. This is important because if you’re designing with the web in mind, you’re actually creating content that’s responsive to a phone, and then they can scroll, and have direct access to really important information. However, mostly importantly, this important information is at the top of the web page, with an embedded, friendly, brief welcome video from an instructor. Therefore, the very first thing, from the very first tap, the student is seeing their instructor, they can hear the instructor, and it this information is immediately accessible. A liquid syllabus can be done with a free website or blogging tool, like [Google Sites](#), [Weebly](#), or a [Wordpress](#) blog. This is a key design feature for accessibility and is a warm invitation. Be sure that everything in that liquid syllabus is written in “hopeful” language instead of saying, “*you’re not going to do this,*” and “*don’t do this,*” and “*avoid the red text*”, it’s more about ensuring that when students look at the language, they not only feel included, but they can see themselves succeeding in it.
6. **Wisdom Wall.** *Learning is a process of growth.* Exposing students to role models with like identities increases self-confidence and minimizes stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995) by changing the narratives students lean on to anticipate their challenges (Spitzer & Aronson, 2017). Further, engaging students in metacognition helps them to recognize their learning progress, increasing self-efficacy. Therefore, create a Wisdom Wall (Pacansky-Brock, 2017) at the end of a course by asking students to reflect back to the start of the course and identify something they know now that they wish they had known then. Then, ask your students to share that idea in the form of advice for your next group of incoming students. When your next course begins, share the Wisdom Wall with your new students.

References

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