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# Teaching Masters-Level Counseling Courses: Moving from Surviving to Thriving

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# Teaching Masters-Level Counseling Courses: Moving from Surviving to Thriving

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## Teaching principles based on Current research (& Experience)

### **Characteristics of effective college/university teachers**

- Are good learners who seek feedback and reflection to make positive changes to enhance student learning
- Focus on student learning, not just their own performance in class
- Develop clear learning goals and objectives to help create effective learning environments
- Understand that learning is facilitated by a well organized course and class session
- Focus on students *doing* rather than just knowing
- Have a highly compelling story to tell about their discipline
- Use the skills of their discipline to teach their discipline
- Model that failure and struggle is an integral part of learning and is not to be feared
- Have high expectations for students, but choose objectives and activities that students see as relevant and important
- Are open and enthusiastic and curious about their field (and about life)
- Build ongoing and immediate teacher-to-student and student-to-student feedback into the course
- Use both formative and summative assessments and view grades as a way to communicate rather than as a

- tool to rank and judge
- Find a way to assess prior knowledge
- Use teaching strategies such as case studies and problem-based learning to stimulate higher-order thinking

### **Best practices in integrating discussions of power/privilege**

- **Establish an environment of trust and openness:**
  - Involve students in developing discussion norms
  - Intentional offense/disrespect is unlikely, but we all have blind spots
  - Share some of your own assumptions and/or missteps around diversity
- **Start small with non-threatening and/or low risk sharing:**
  - Silly or embarrassing things about themselves
  - Personal values (inherently neutral) and how they were formed
  - Ways in which they are not privileged / obstacles they have overcome
- **Embed these conversations in many classes and contexts:**
  - Start early (first classes in the program)
  - Diversity/power/privilege fits in any counseling course
  - Choose textbooks that make mention of these issues

### **Additional suggestions (Utt, 2012):**

- Stress that privilege is relative (community, time, specific privilege)
- Privilege does not = guilt
- Encourage concrete actions to offset privilege
- Privilege says nothing about character

### **Keeping courses fun/interesting, while still meeting objectives**

“I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.”  
(Confucius, n.d.)

- Experiential Learning (Kolb, 1984)
- **Active Learning Techniques** (Bonwell & Eison, 1991)
  - Ice breakers
  - Think/Pair/Share
  - One minute paper/free write
  - Scenarios/Case Studies
  - Roundtable

### **Characteristics to embody (Jenkins, 2105):**

- **Personality** - good natured, approachable, funny, don't take self or content too seriously
- **Presence** – fully in the moment, connecting to course

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- For additional pdfs of a variety of teaching-related articles and reports, go to:  
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B1IQnokwxjJgMmNQNXBYUjZMcm8>