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AVOIDING PEDANTISM: A PATH TO THOUGHTFUL TEACHING

Pedantism is the despotic display of trivial, narrow-minded scholarship and the frivolous adherence to rules. This sensitive topic is rarely talked about or seldom written about in journals.

Discussing pedantism risks hurting our feelings, yet perhaps faculty are the people that need to take this topic to heart the most. The intent in presenting this information is to stimulate discussion, correspondence and introspection. As teachers we share knowledge not only for our own satisfaction and gratification but primarily for the enrichment of students. Lest we lose sight of the reason for being in the teaching environment, let us look into the topic of pedantism.

The thoughtful teacher is one who is in tune with the minds of his or her students. The thoughtful teacher pours forth knowledge and imparts wisdom, leaving a permanent mark on the cortexes of those willing to learn. By definition, teaching does not take place unless learning occurs; therefore if students do not learn, we are not

teaching (1,2). Although the wish to emulate the thoughtful teacher may be strong, certain forces can thwart accomplishment of this goal. Pedantic attitudes and pedantic training provide one of the deadliest poisons with which to kill the learning spirit. Understanding the enemy of pedantism and how to overcome it can make us stronger and help us avoid this dreadful trap. The path of thoughtful teaching can bring us one step closer to reaching our goal to be the best teacher we can be.

The Problem of Pedantism

A pedant is a teacher who overrates the importance of minor or trivial points of learning, displaying a scholarship lacking in sense of proportion or judgment; a narrow-minded teacher who demands exact adherence to a set of arbitrary rules (3). Pedantism creates an abominable environment on the sacred grounds of education.

There is an unspoken contract in the student-teacher