

A Good Tutoring Cycle

After my initial tutoring sessions with my tutees, as a new tutor, I found myself asking some questions. The questions were:

1. What are my duties as a tutor?
2. How can I effectively help the tutee to cope with his/her problems?
3. How can I manage the limited time as effectively as possible?

After subsequent tutoring sessions, the informative classes that I attended, the useful handouts, videos and the help of senior tutors, I found some answers to these and other questions.

As a tutor my duty was to increase the confidence of the tutees, help them to learn independently, and see that effective learning takes place. To ensure that the sessions were productive I would focus attention on a joint exploration of the actual academic problem, and be supportive without assuming responsibility for the tutee or for the problem. My goal was to concentrate on learning how to learn by focusing on procedures, processes, clear thinking, and problem solving. As a tutor I also learned to avoid assuming a "telling role" in my tutoring sessions. The point is that tutors should not take advantage of the situation to demonstrate their knowledge or to prove to the students how bright they are. Instead of 'telling' the students, I should try to encourage the students to answer questions. I should ask the students to demonstrate their understanding rather than asking standard questions such as, "Do you understand?" or by asking questions which require "yes" or "no" answers. There was another important lesson that I learned and that was, not to do the homework for the student. A student learns by doing his work himself. As a senior tutor appropriately remarked – "Your job as a tutor is to eventually become unemployed.....Actually, one of your best successes could be that a student NO LONGER needs your services."

The next question that I want to deal with is – How do I help the tutee to cope with his or her problems? I discovered that a tutor should act as a guide and let the tutee play a dominant role. The tutees should be the ones to set the agenda and learn to allocate time for each task. The tutor can help the tutee to break down the problem into steps so that each problem can be dealt with, one at a time. After a specific problem has been dealt with, the tutor can elicit responses from the tutee by asking well-directed questions. Questioning is a very effective method for reinforcing concepts that have just been learned. Summarizing what has been learned at the end of a session also helps the tutee to learn. Summarizing can help the tutor to gauge the tutee's understanding of the problem. Tutees can also be guided to anticipate what has to be learned next. The tutor can help the tutee to plan for the next session so that both the tutor and the tutee can be gainfully employed. This brings me to the next question, which is that of effective time management.

When I first started tutoring I noticed that time seemed to just fly and at the end of an hour's tutoring session, I felt that I had not accomplished much. I decided that with the co-operation of my tutee and with a little preparation, we could solve this problem. For example, if it was an assignment such as an essay that the tutee would have to write based on a lesson in the textbook, we could read the lesson before our meetings. This would ensure that we were comfortable with the content. We could then utilize the time during our next tutorial session to brainstorm and

organize our ideas. During a subsequent session we could analyze the assignment and check to see whether the topic had been adequately dealt with. We could look for common and recurring errors so that we could pin point the areas of weakness. Once the tutee has learned about his/her areas of weakness and how to deal with those weaknesses his/her confidence level is bound to increase and learning can take place.

A good tutoring cycle is one in which the tutee has learned what he or she has come to learn and when problems have been effectively dealt with. It is amazing how a good tutoring session not only gives satisfaction but also increases the confidence of the tutor and tutee alike and helps to make learning a rewarding experience.