

*Research*



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# **The Gift of Challenging Students**

**Problems come with opportunities in their hands**





DO YOU FEEL AN UNSEEN FORCE PULLING ON YOU ?

YEAH, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT.

IT'S THE BACK-TO-SCHOOL VORTEX. WE'RE BEING SLOWLY SUCKED BACK IN.

WJJE/ALDRICH  
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It's heeeerrrrreeee.

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**“Personally I am always ready to learn although I do not always like being taught”**

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**Winston Churchill**

**“Success is not final, failure is not fatal; it is the courage to continue that counts.”**

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**Winston Churchill**



# Challenging Students - Causes

**Situational (temporary) stressful personal issues.**

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**Examples?**



# WORKING DAZE

JOHN ZAKOUR  
KYLE MILLER

DANA, FIND A STRESS-INDUCING  
SEMINAR TO SEND HIM TO...

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ZAKOUR/MILLER



# **Personality Disorders**

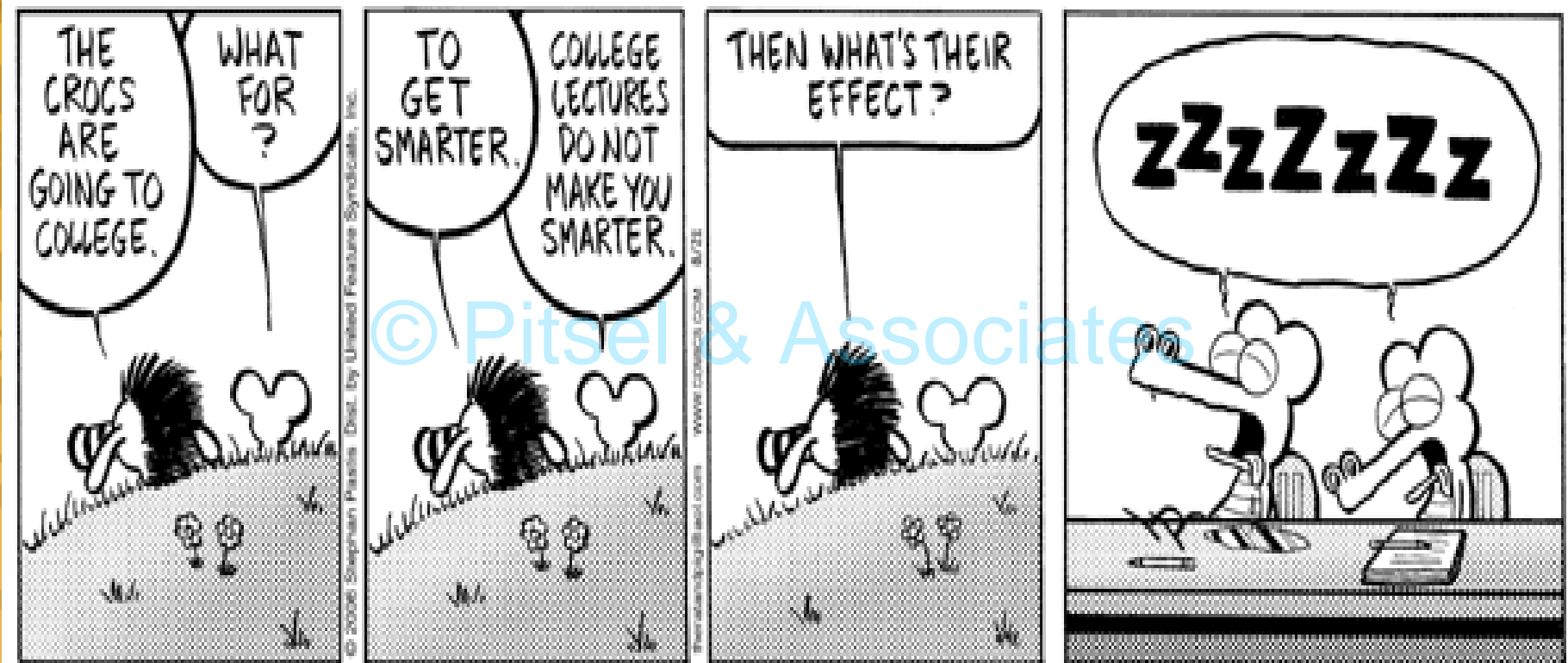
# **Mental Health Issues**

**You**

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**Personal Style**

**Teaching Style**



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# Personal Issues

To what extent should an instructor accommodate a personal issue being experienced by a student?

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1

2

3

4

5



# Rating Scale

**1 – Seldom – it is not fair to other students to make special accommodations for one and not for all**

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**3 – It depends on the issue and the situation**

**5 – As much as possible; our major responsibility is to make learning as easy as possible for the student.**



# Case One

**You are teaching a 2 day, non-credit course. One of the students informs you that he will have to miss the first afternoon, and about 2 hours the next morning, due to a custody dispute with his former partner. He has to meet with his lawyer this afternoon and be in court tomorrow morning.**



**About 3 weeks after this student missed the first afternoon and the first 2.5 hours of the following morning, he phones to ask you if you will send a letter to his employer indicating that he attended the course in order to receive credit toward their in-house leadership program**



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# Case Two

One of your students appears to be quite distracted and preoccupied. She constantly checks her blackberry during the class, including group work periods where she leaves the room to make a call. When you enquire during the noon break whether everything is ok, she tells you that everything is fine but she has some personal stuff she has to attend to, and needs to have her BB on in case there is an emergency.



**As the course continues, you notice 2 or 3 students begin to surreptitiously check their emails when some of their fellow classmates are talking about their own individual work situations or issues.**



# Types of Challenging Students





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"I resent being called lazy. The politically correct term is 'motivationally impaired.'"

www.comicpage.com



# Politically Incorrect Students

**Politically Incorrect Students create havoc in the classroom by using terms that others find offensive**

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**I'm  
Sorry. My  
fault. I forgot  
you were an  
idiot**



# Hyper Sensitive Students

Hyper-Sensitive Students are acutely sensitive to politically incorrect language, smells (perfume, markers), or opinions that deviate from their own.



Women do not snore, burp, sweat or pass gas.  
Therefore, they must  
"BITCH or they will BLOW UP!"



# Argumentative Students

**Argumentative Students constantly disagree with the Instructor, other students, or both.**

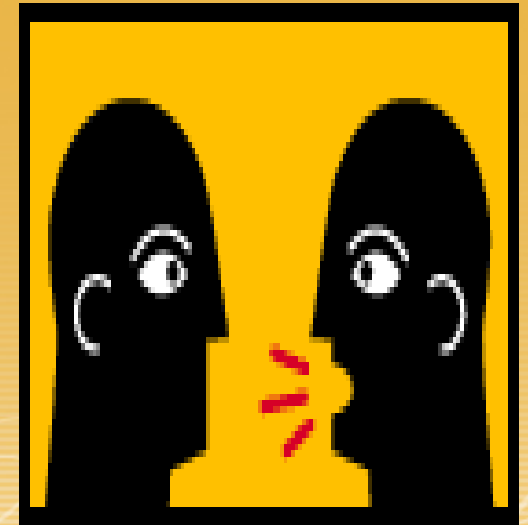
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# Air Hog

As the name suggests, the Air Hogs take up a disproportionate amount of air time, both in small group work, and in general class discussion.

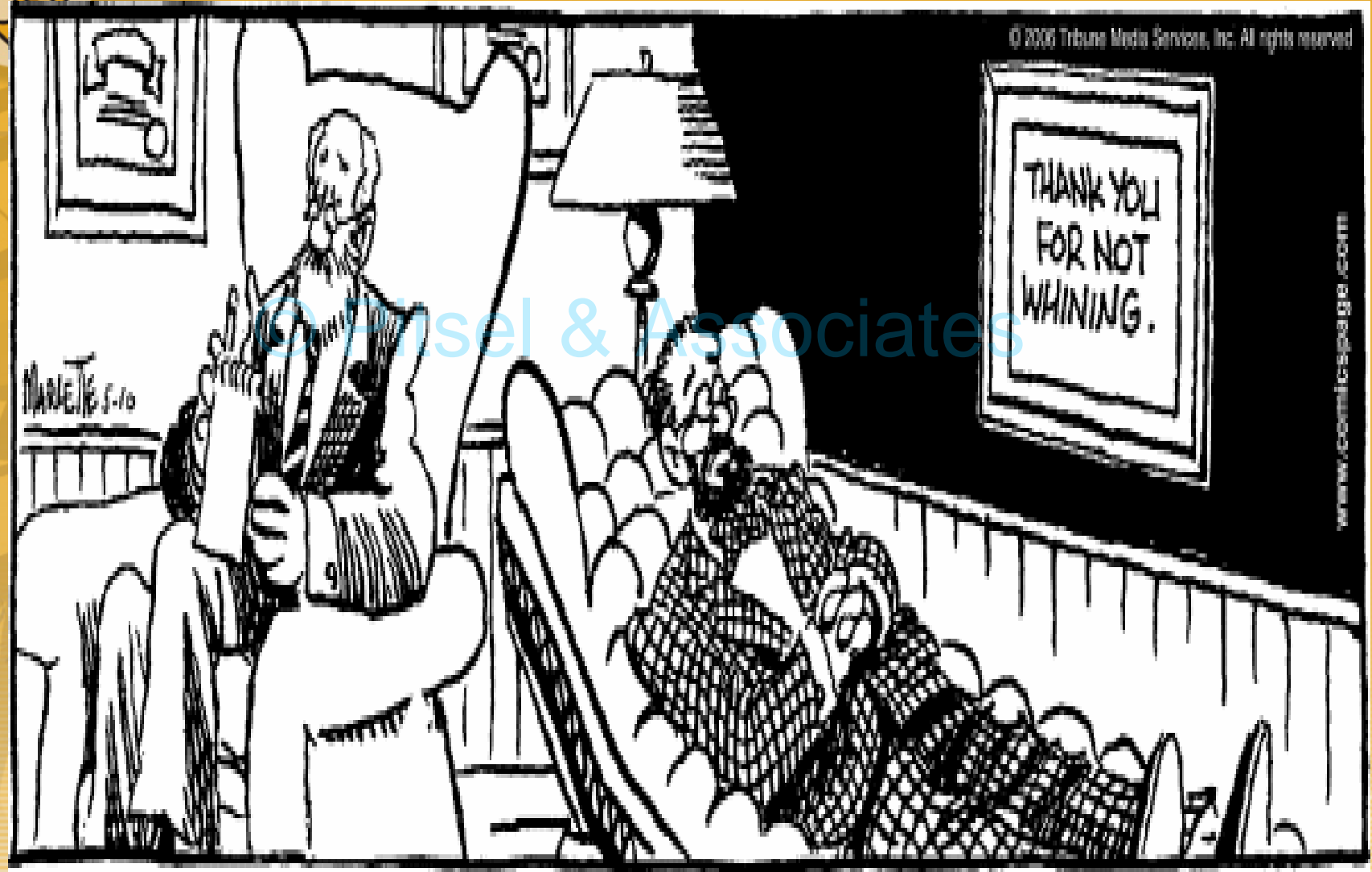




# The “Expert”

The “Expert” has an opinion (an expert one, naturally) on **EVERYTHING**. They have done everything, read everything. In short, **THEY** should be teaching the class.





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www.comicpage.com



# The Whiner

**Whiners are often “victims” who complain about how nothing that you are teaching can possibly work in their situation – and then they spend considerable time telling everyone how awful their situation is. Their favorite phrase is “Yes, but”**



# The Bully

**Bullies get their way through intimidation. In classroom situations this generally takes the appearance of ridiculing the opinions or ideas of others, dismissing others' comments as being too emotional or irrelevant, or demanding that others in the group do things their way.**



# 2<sup>nd</sup> Language Students

2<sup>nd</sup> language students *can* be very challenging if their English language skills are very poor, if their accent is very difficult to understand, or, in some subject areas, if their cultural values differ significantly from current Canadian business values.



# The Manipulating Student

The Manipulating Students are those who “con” you into giving them things that normally you wouldn’t – free copies of test instruments, books, materials, etc. Usually very charming, they take advantage of people’s good nature, but in a very indirect way.



# The Dependant Student

The Dependant Students absolutely need you to explain things, to fix things, to do things for them. They can't figure out how to fill in a test sheet, an evaluation form, or answer sheets. You need to show them – and often on break (lunch, coffee) time.

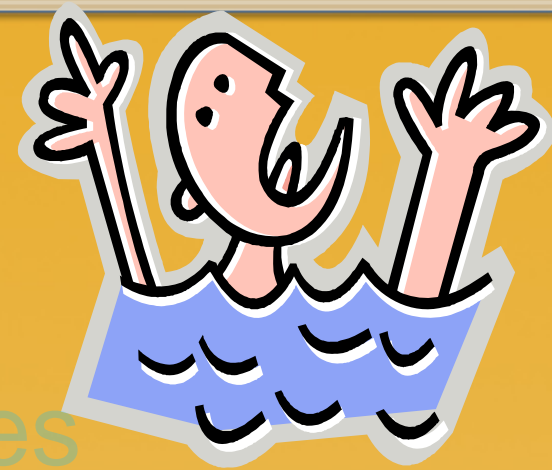
# Sexually Provocative Students



**The Sexually Provocative Students are those who exhibit a “personal interest” which takes the form of personal, intimate conversations, meetings, or invitations.**



# The “Lost” Student



The Lost Students are “in over their head.” They either do not have sufficient background knowledge, skills or experience in order to keep up with the rest of the class.



# Now, Pay Attention

## How to Handle, Manage, Survive Challenging Students

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### 1. Work on Prevention rather than Cure by:

Varying your teaching methods



# Lecture Method

If we lecture we invite students to:

- zone out
- argue with the Instructor
- sub-group
- engage in alternate activities



# To Improve Lectures

**Have students think of examples rather than giving them yourself**

**When lecturing about a process, have students flowchart it, or mind-map it**

**Have students listen in order to prepare a rebuttal**



# Group Work Method

If we do group work primarily we invite students to:

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- complain they haven't learned anything
- engage in social loafing
- complain the Instructor is too lazy to do any real work



# To Improve Group Work Activities

## Group Discussion

Have group set some ground rules  
**BEFORE** they begin discussion

Provide discussion questions – not  
“discuss this and report back” approach

Give different groups different questions  
to encourage listening during the  
reporting phase

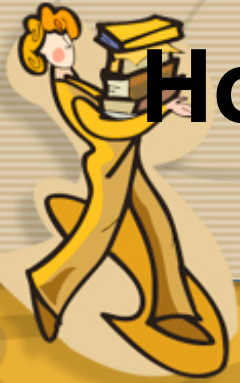


# How to Handle, Manage, Survive Challenging Students

## 1. Work on Prevention rather than Cure

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By having a variety of teaching methods

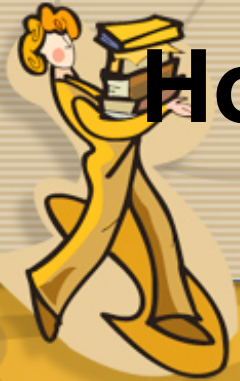


# How to Handle, Manage, Survive Challenging Students

## 1. Work on Prevention rather than Cure © Pitsel & Associates

By having a variety of teaching methods

By being clear about content, expectations, outcomes



# How to Handle, Manage, Survive Challenging Students

## 1. Work on Prevention rather than Cure

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By having a variety of teaching methods

By being clear about content, expectations, outcomes

By rotating group membership frequently



# How to Handle, Manage, Survive Challenging Students

## 2. Develop a variety of Verbal and Non-Verbal Strategies

- Consensus groups (go, no-go cards)
- Provide time for personal reflection activities
- Think-pair-share activities
- Develop contrary scenarios
- Use Analogical thinking – students develop metaphors or analogies for a principle or procedure



# Manage Yourself

**Know what sets you off –  
your biases**

**your hot buttons**

**Breathe and reflect BEFORE you  
speak**

**Don't over-personalize remarks**

**Separate yourself from your role as  
Instructor**

**Act assertively not aggressively**



# And Stay Away From:

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# Sarcasm



THERE ARE SOME INCREDIBLY STUPID MISTAKES IN THIS MEMO YOU WROTE.

REALLY? I RAN IT THROUGH SPELL-CHECK.

YOU SHOULD HAVE RUN IT THROUGH DUMB-CHECK.

WISSE/  
ALDRICH



# Appearance of Unfairness

**Around grades**

**Around instructor attention**

**Around instructor approval**

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# And Remember:

**When the course is the lecture type, students say, "We never get a chance to say anything".**

**When the course is the discussion type, students say, "The professor just sits there. We don't know how to teach the course".**



**When all aspects of the course are covered in class, students say, "All she does is follow the text."**

**When students are responsible for covering part of the course outside the class, they will say, "She never covers half the things we're tested on."**



**When you give objective tests,  
students say, "They don't allow for  
any individuality in us".**

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**When you give essay tests,  
students say, "they're too vague.  
We never know what's expected."**



**When you give no tests, students say, "It isn't fair. He can't tell how much we really know."**

**When you have a lot of quizzes instead of a midterm and final, students say "We need major exams. Quizzes don't cover enough to really tell anything."**



**When you have only two exams for the whole course, students say, “too much rides on each one. You can just have a bad day”.**

**From *Looking Out, Looking In*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition**



**When you hear any of these, don't say, "Suck it up, Princess, because then students will say, "Oh, you're just like Dr. Pat!"**