

Teaching Cases Presented as Fables to learn the Mentoring Process in Medical Training. Part three: Apprentice in the Period of Transition, Reflection, and Harvest. Autumn

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Abstract:

Fables allow us to understand something unknown in terms of familiarity. Therefore, they are frequently used in all sciences that adopt common terms to name complex realities. The mentoring process in medical training, is one of these complex realities, explained here through a fable: that of the virtuous and thoughtful mentor, the slow and parsimonious tortoise called Dr. Golden-Headed, who “discovers” a certain number of Scientific Laws of medical training, and his apprentice, whose name changes throughout the training and development process. Based on these short stories, the stages that medical trainees go through in training will be described, from their hesitant beginnings of preclinical training where basic sciences are studied (Spring), through clinical training, which involves practice in hospitals and health centers (Summer), and rotating internship, where practical experience is acquired in various specialties (Autumn), to their independent practice and specialization, which allows the doctor to focus on a specific area of medicine (Winter), and some keys to what the tutoring work should be shown. In this part three (apprentice in the period of transition, reflection, and harvest. Autumn) Dr. Golden-Headed “discovers” several laws: law of the Beagle, Robinson Crusoe's law, the law of growth by analogy, the law of fishing, the law of the tissue box, Eisenstein's law. These “laws” explain meaningful learning, learning log or portfolio, learning to learn, concept maps, learning by analogy, learning through questions, critical thinking, lateral thinking, and empathic understanding.

Keywords: medical education; tutoring; mentoring; teaching; medical intern

Introduction

Autumn

Dr. Golden-Headed observes the arrival of Autumn with his usual twinkle in his eyes.

The leaves on the trees turn yellow, preparing for Winter sleep and attention turns inward. It's time to review the old, and prepare for renewal .

–“Ah, the treasure of Autumn!” sighs Dr. Golden-Headed. “It is the time when the apprentice is an adult... ; it is the time of reflection on wisdom.”

The Law of The Beagle

–“Look, dear apprentice—who was a ripe fruit—I have prepared this Learning Notebook or logbook or diary for you and me to use,” said Dr. Golden-Headed.

–“It is my latest discovery: THE LAW OF THE BEAGLE.”

–“We can write down the cases we see, the data that caught our attention, the problems we experienced, their analysis, and training proposals. It will be a logbook of our journey,” added Dr. Golden-Headed.

–“Beagle?” asked Ripe Fruit.

–“From Charles Darwin's 'Voyage of the Beagle'. You know... a travel notebook. The voyage that Darwin began in 1831 and was to last two years ended five years later. Darwin took careful note of what he saw, what he intuited, what happened, and what was gradually being demonstrated.”

–“Okay... We discuss many clinical issues that arise during consultations with patients, and we frequently seek references and reflect...” said Ripe Fruit.

–“Do you think, Ripe Fruit., that to start these days, you might write down any problems you might have right now to get through the consultation alone, and we can discuss them at the end of the week?” asked Dr. Golden-Headed.

–“Aha! It's like starting a photo album, isn't it?” asked Ripe Fruit.

–“Yes, that's it. One day we'll decide to put our shelves or closets in order, and at one point or another, the photo album will come into our hands, some

recent but others from a long time ago. It's a journey like any other, with its surprises," replied Dr. Golden-Headed.

Dr. Golden-Headed reflected again...: "Keeping a learning journal is a useful strategy... It consists of having students keep a field journal in which they record their experiences in class, the difficulties encountered in various topics or teaching units, their initial understandings and processes of conceptual change, along with the results of class discussions and exchanges of views with their classmates. The journal can also record their expectations regarding exams, the results obtained, and the reasons for any discrepancies. In this way, as the subjects progress, there is a documentary basis that can be used to encourage students to self-assess their progress in the subjects and the change in their understandings of learning" (1-6).

- "Achieving a goal in itself isn't as valuable as the experience that can be acquired in the process of overcoming obstacles along the way. The process is more rewarding than the victory itself. When the learner is focused on their learning process, their successes and failures are based on their goal of self-knowledge and self-development, day by day."

- "For the learner, it is more important to advance with reflection for each content than to go through all the contents of the program."

And she wrote on her blackboard: "What I say are not mere words, but precise references from my logbook."

The Robinson Crusoe Law

- "I have discovered a new Law, which is a continuation of Beagle's Law: THE ROBINSON CRUSOE LAW!" exclaimed Dr. Golden-Headed.

- "The one from the desert island?" said the apprentice, who was now a tall, brown stalk of wheat drooping under the weight of the ripe grains.

- "Indeed. Robinson Crusoe is shipwrecked on an island near the mouth of the Orinoco River. The sole survivor, he retrieves weapons and materials from the stranded ship. He builds his own hut and begins a journal in which he chronicles his progress in woodworking, grain farming, domesticating goats, and learning pottery. We already have the journal, but we need to review it to observe the changes and lessons learned (7, 8)," said Dr. Golden-Headed.

- "A diary is a powerful tool for personal growth. It forces us to be disciplined and reflective. Also, in this way, we can become aware, as Robinson Crusoe was, for example, of the footprint that shouldn't have been there" (9).

And she added: "By reviewing the Learning Notebook, we can create a new learning tool: Concept Maps. The objective of this tool is to promote meaningful learning and develop learning-to-learn skills (10) and facilitate meaningful learning" (11-14), explained Dr. Golden-Headed.

- "I think it will be useful to me... because it will help me realize my learning processes and appreciate the relationships between concepts, especially the cross-relationships between concepts that are seemingly unrelated," said Tall Stalk of Brown Wheat Bending Under the Weight of Ripe Grains, who was a very mature learner.

And Dr. Golden-Headed thought: "Your brain has a lot of data: 'download' it by developing a mental map." She wrote on the board: "Fifteen steps farther, five hundred bluebirds flew in, circled three times, and flew away."

The Law of Growth by Analogy

The apprentice, who was at this moment a leafless, damp poplar tree by the river, was treating a patient... While listening to the patient's story, he remembered that a few months earlier he had treated a similar case with another patient, albeit in a different context... Because of this learning, he was able to propose an intervention strategy, with the appropriate similarities and differences, based on the previous case.

Dr. Golden-Headed, who had seen him perform, said to him afterward:

- "Very well! Leafless Damp Poplar Tree By The River, we have discovered another crucial Law: THE LAW OF GROWTH BY ANALOGY."

- "The house of the poet Pablo Neruda in Isla Negra, was built like the houses of the peasants of many villages, in the same way as nature: growing from the inside out, creating structures—be they houses, paintings, or poems—based on a certain ordering of the analogy of forms," explained Dr. Golden-Headed.

- And she continued: "Analogical reasoning is a constructive and dynamic learning process for acquiring new knowledge, as opposed to repetitive or mechanical learning. The use of analogies is a learning mechanism based on the transfer of knowledge to new situations" (15-18).

- "Problem-solving by analogy is an example of selective comparison: the person acting realizes that this new information is similar in several respects (and different in others) to information already known and uses that information in a more appropriate way to understand the new information."

And Dr. Golden-Headed was meditating again... "Analogies as hooks. When we consider a topic and compare it to something, that something becomes a hook. Analogies activate creativity, as they help explain, understand, guide, and direct our thinking" she wrote on her blackboard.

The Law of Fishing

Dr. Golden-Headed asked Autumn Sunlight That Tans The Quinces:

- "How were the last two patients different? What do you think are the key implications of the last patient? If you could see this patient again, what would you do differently?..."

- "Can you give an example?"

- "Can you tell me more about that?"

- "Do you really think that?"

- "Shouldn't you consider...?"

- "Is that what you feel...or what you think would be better if...or maybe you should...?"

- "And anything else?"

- "So, all in all, you're saying that...?"

Autumn Sunlight That Tans The Quinces struggled to answer... It required a lot of thinking!

Dr. Golden-Headed interrupted her: "We've discovered THE LAW OF FISHING!"

- "With so many questions I can't go fishing!"

- "Questions have always been the classic means of obtaining information from other people. We can use them to obtain information about ourselves or to direct our search. This is the basis of the so-called Socratic questions (19). But there are two types of questions: fishing questions and hunting questions (20)", explained Dr. Golden-Headed.

- "Ahaha, that's why the FISHING LAW!", laughed Autumn Sunlight That Tans The Quinces.

- "Yes, of course. When we go fishing, we put the bait in the water and we don't know what we're going to catch. A fishing question can have many answers. It's an open question: 'What, which, how...?' When we go hunting, we aim for something in particular. Hunting questions have a known objective; they are confirmation questions. We have an idea about something and we want to test it. They're closed questions: they're answered with "yes" or "no." Asking questions skillfully involves a combination of fishing and hunting questions. In fact, healthcare professionals have known this since time immemorial, that the answers they get from a patient depend on the questions they ask and how they ask them."

- "So, instead of asking 'What happened?' a fishing question might be: 'What could we have done differently?' or 'What other ways are there of looking at this?' asked Autumn Sunlight That Tans The Quinces.

-“Okay. What if...?” is a typical fishing question that opens up a range of possibilities and hypothetical scenarios,” added Dr. Golden-Headed.

Ans she continued: “By the way, Are you doing what you love? Are you making it count twice? and Are you staying focused?” (21).

Dr. Golden-Headed began to ponder... “How does the mentor initiate the insight-curiosity-wisdom chain? By asking questions that require higher-level thinking: questions that require a deep search to answer” (22, 23). And emerging from her meditation, she wrote on the blackboard: “Why do trees hide the splendor of their roots? Always the most beautiful answer to the one who asks the most difficult question.”

The Law of The Tissue Box

-“Today we're going to discuss how your training is going. You're now a Crane About to Migrate South. That is, an adult apprentice, in the Autumn of your training, so it's in our best interest to do a little evaluation,” Dr. Golden-Headed told her apprentice.

-“Can you mention any concepts that have had the greatest impact on you that you've learned during this time?” Dr. Golden-Headed asked.

-“Learn... One begins to wonder what it was that one had been learning during those years at university... Schwartzman's reaction, that's what I learned! Although I don't think one was even sure of its existence... Later I learned how to win that game in which one had to cite the most obscure article on pressure or pH diagrams...”

And if you were asked, “What will happen to the patient?” the good answer for the staff physician was: “Forget the patient, we're talking about hydrogen ions and the pH of the blood...” And horror! When I had to talk to the wife or daughter of a deceased patient... there was nothing dramatic or sentimental about it for me: it was just another obstacle I had to overcome; I didn't... I had the slightest idea about what those people were going through, what they needed to hear... I would have begged them to listen to some of my knowledge of the Krebs cycle. How poorly the University had prepared me for this!...” (24).

And she continued: “I see all of that in retrospect. Here it's been somewhat different... And I've learned... that you should always have a box of tissues on the table!”, replied Crane Who Is About to Migrate South, very seriously.

-“Oh! I was moved by your story! (25) A hard and painful learning experience, but I find it useful or 'activating' (26), and ultimately... maybe perfect!” exclaimed Dr. Golden-Headed. “You've actually discovered a new law: THE LAW OF THE TISSUE BOX. Can you explain it to me?”

-“Yes, of course, Dr. Golden-Headed. I learned that it's very important to have a box of tissues on the office table. It's like giving permission to cry. It means that emotions are welcome, that there are not barriers to the expression of feelings, that bio-psycho-social problems that people experience are addressed there. It's not about the liver or the heart, or the Schwartzman reaction, or hydrogen ions and blood pH, or the Krebs cycle, but about human beings... who sometimes cry,” she explained.

-“If you can listen to what the other person is telling you, if you can understand how they see things, if you can see the personal meaning they have for them, if you can feel the emotions they provoke in them, then you will be unleashing powerful forces of change or empathic understanding in that person and in yourself,” Dr. Golden-Headed clarified.

Dr. Golden-Headed was meditating again... And he wrote on his blackboard: “Sharing feelings and emotions will help us understand.”

Eisenstein's Law

It was the next patient... The apprentice, now a red deer, was conducting the consultation...

-“I don't quite understand what you're saying...” said in a clear and direct tone of voice. At the same time, he frowned and raised his hands at shoulder level, indicating that he didn't understand and needed a clearer explanation...

In the next patient:

-“I'm very moved by what you're telling me...” And as he says this, he looks down, glances at his cell phone, and his body is hunched over.

Dr. Golden-Headed, who was observing, commented:

-“Dear Red Deer, you performed very well with the first patient: the nonverbal message (frowning, raising hands) was perfectly in tune with the verbal message, reinforcing the idea of confusion and the need for a more complete explanation. But, in the second, the verbal and nonverbal messages were not in tune. The patient will likely perceive the nonverbal message (nervousness, embarrassment, or lack of interest) as more authentic, and the verbal message as a lie or an exaggeration, since body language can contradict your words” (27-29).

She added: “You must keep in mind the very important EISENSTEIN'S LAW,” Dr. Golden-Headed said while tilting his head down and then up.

-“that head movement... It does that mean you agree?” asked Red Deer.

-“Indeed. I agree; with a little more attention and care, you'll do very well in the future... applying EISENSTEIN'S LAW,” replied Dr. Golden-Headed.

“Yes, thank you... but... Einstein? Are you referring to Albert Einstein, the German physicist known for his theory of relativity?” asked Red Deer naively.

-“Well, it could be... but no. I mean to Sergei Mikhailovich Eisenstein, a Soviet film and theater director,” corrected Dr. Golden-Headed.

-“Wel...I... actually... don't know that law... yet...” stammered Red Deer.

-“Tuning verbal and nonverbal language means ensuring that both complement each other and convey a coherent message, ensuring effective communication. It's like looking at the frames of the Battle of the Frozen Lake sequence in Eisenstein's film 'Alexander Nevsky,' where we find a complete correspondence between the movement of Sergei Prokofiev's music and the movement of the eye along the lines of the visual composition in the director's cut, especially in the 'attack of the horsemen' and the 'punishment of the horsemen.' In this way, this attack appears the most impressive and memorable”, Dr. Golden-Headed clarified. And she meditated: “Having sensations is the ability to tune into our senses” (30-32).

After which she wrote on her blackboard: “He who looks outside, dreams; he who looks inside, awakens.”

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