Weichen Li

Instructor: Christina Brady

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Position Paper

What is “fear”? *“Fear” is a feeling induced by perceived danger or threat, response arises from the perception of danger leading to confrontation with or escape from/avoiding the threat*.” (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia) In other words, “fear” is the feeling that people are afraid or worried something bad which is going to happen. For a growing child, “fear” is an essential part for his growth. As time goes on, when we grow up, families’ support, teachers’ encouragement or friends’ inspiration still could help us to minimize the impact of “fear”. However, everything has changed since we became the international graduate students in the Into Mason Graduate Pathway as we would feel a huge sense of fear about the upcoming challenges. In the new environment, everything seemed unfamiliar and we had to learn how to get along well with others. However, if we could get a guidance which can overcome the obstacle of the “fear”, it would be easier and more flexible for us to deal with various challenges. Therefore, I believe that educating students with educator’s own experience and guiding students to manage the “fear” could be an effective strategy for students who study in the Into Mason Graduate Pathway.

In the article “Recognizing Student Fear: The Elephant in the Classroom,” T. Scoot Bledsoe and Janice J. Baskin (2014) tried to define “fear”, which was the key concept throughout the whole article. And they explored the diversity of fears, such as performance-based anxiety, fear of being laughed at, fear of failure, and the cultural components of fear. In order to help students to manage fear-based behaviors and achieve emotional balance and academic success, Bledsoe deeply analyzed the cognitive, emotional and physiological components of fear. And then he provided eight strategies for educators by his a series of analysis. The strategies include acquiring a better knowledge about fear, recognizing the external factors outside the classroom, guiding students with the educators’ experience, creating a nurturing environment, communicating with students both as a group and individual, providing icebreaker activity and allowing students to make full use of campus resources (Bledsoe, 2014).

Firstly, learning how to minimize the impact of “fear” is a significant lesson for students who study in the Into Mason Graduate Pathway. When students are puzzled by the fear of failure, they are always confused and easily trapped in an anxious situation. Lehrer (2010) states that “when people are forced to compete against a peer who seems far superior, they often don’t rise to the challenge. Instead, they give up”. He claims that competitive pressure may force students to abandon the goals and dare not to face the reality directly and bravely. Apparently, in the INTO Mason Graduate Pathway, students will have a heavy workload in competitive situation. And their final target is to pass all tests successfully, so the fear of failure is a big challenge for them. Therefore, it is very necessary for students to minimize the impact of the “fear” in the Into Mason Pathway. A good mentality could help students get a good academic performance.

Secondly, releasing anxiety is also an indispensable part which is beneficial to control the feeling of “fear”. Bledsoe (2014) claims that “spending a few minutes helping students ‘see the elephant’ of anxiety and offering and even demonstrating a few anxiety-management techniques will be class well spent in building a stronger sense of self-efficacy in your students.” He asserts that assisting students to release their anxiety is totally necessary. For instance, before attending an important test, I usually feel anxious and nervous. Sometimes I am not interested in anything especially the repeated review. I realize that if I keep this negative mood when I am taking an exam, it will be quite risky, since people can hardly concentrate on the things that they are doing when they are anxious. At this time, my teacher would always advise me to hang out with my friends or do some exercise, and finally I find it really does work. Since then, I always use this method to release my pressure. Thus, I’d like to suggest that if students are anxious before attending a significant test, releasing anxiety is an essential way to weaken the feeling of “fear”.

 Thirdly, negative emotion is an obstacle for students who are in the Into Mason Graduate Pathway. The negative emotion always accompanies with an unsatisfying grade for students. Bledsoe (2014) believes that “if a student experiences self-defeating thoughts about his low grade on a term paper, the instructor can encourage him to identify problem areas, seek available help, and plan more carefully for future assignments. Instead of feeling anxious and helpless, the student is thus empowered to find solutions that promote self-efficacy.” It means that escape is not a correct or a wise way to avoid fear, realizing the deficiency and rebuilding the confidence is what we should do instead. For example, I had a variety of exams every few weeks in high school, the atmosphere was really intense and competitive during the time of taking exams. However, I didn’t have too many chances to complain as nobody would care if you were upset about the grade. I hoped somebody would like to share the experience of overcoming difficulties with me, but there was nobody. The only thing what I could do after getting a disappointing grade was to encourage myself to work out a reasonable study plan and fill in the gaps, then I would try my best to make great progress in the next exam. Because of this, I consider educating students with educators’ experience is very important, especially for students who are confused or upset. If educators could share their experience with students and help them to overcome this obstacle, there is no doubt that students’ confidence would be rebuilt.

 In conclusion, educating students with educator’s own experience and guiding students to manage the “fear” not only could help students release their anxiety, but also could get a satisfying achievement in the Into Mason Graduate Pathway. As the authors said after students successfully overcome the fear, “they are thus empowered to find solutions that promote self-efficacy.” (Bledsoe, 2014)

References

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