

STUDENT COMMENT/CONCERN. *I felt you babied the students in this class, suggesting that that all life should be roses, otherwise, there is something wrong with the situation. You don't seem to want us to perceive "reality" clearly, but to try to skew it positively. You were a passive instructor, and let the students lead too much. Your class also had too high a workload and multiple assignments that were overwhelming*

MY RESPONSE Thank you so much for your constructive feedback on our class. I have tried to carefully hear your concerns in my response below. I take them very seriously, and hope you find this response helpful. I do truly appreciate you, and your willingness to share so openly.

It seems you had two main concerns. First, you felt I "babied" the students' minds. Secondly, on the other hand, you felt I gave an excessively high workload and multiple assignments that were too overwhelming.

WORKLOAD CONCERN. Let me address the "workload" first, a separate concern of yours, to which I plead "guilty." Clearly I am very enthused and interested in how we gain a positive sense of control in our lives. I was/am aware that we have only limited time in a 10 week class to share with each other and I wanted to give you all the opportunity to be exposed to as much of the material (external: writing, research; and internal; self-exploration on a personal level) as possible. I did acknowledge that there was going to be a substantial workload up front in class, and tried to be clear which parts of the readings I thought were essential, and which optional. I do apologize if it seemed overwhelming and didn't bring a positive sense of control for you. Clearly, that is not helpful and was not my intent. I wish you would have let me know your concerns earlier, so we could have seen what accommodations might have been made to match your comfort level regarding the work load. I'll make sure in future classes to highlight the amount of work as a potential concern, and provide students an opportunity to share how they're doing on a regular basis. I will also make sure to restate my invitation students to talk with me individually if they have any questions or workload concerns. So, again, thank you for sharing. Now let me turn to your other concern.

BABIED THE STUDENTS—CONCERN 2 . This concern was that you felt I babied the students by my overly optimistic attitude, "that all life should be roses, otherwise, there is something wrong with the situation." Your question is actually a fascinating thought and I have meditated and reflected on it. I think I attempt to practice the "mindfulness" meditation that we did in class—a "bare awareness" seeing all the stars in the night sky. In Buddha's terms again, life as 1000 joys, 1000 sorrows. So, I believe I do indeed see the roses, but also the "thorns." In fact, when I presented the material on different personality theories, I said that each one has to account for the "negative qualities, bad habits, etc" in humans, from Freud's id, to humanistic psychology's "oughts and shoulds"; existential psychology's inauthentic choices; cognitive/behavioral psychology's "bad habits and skill deficits"; transpersonal theory's "dust" on the mirror; and biomedical models' "neurochemical imbalances." As you may remember, we explored in class students' views of the Native American story, "good wolf, bad wolf," which one we feed, and how this might reflect different personality theories (including uni, reciprocal, and omni deterministic models of human agency). In my view, these were certainly discussions of "thorns" in an imperfect world.

What I would say, however, is that I try to investigate whether the “thorns” are necessary suffering. If so, I also like to consider what is the wisest, most compassionate way to deal with them. If they are unnecessary suffering, again, what is the wisest most compassionate way to address them. If there is something wrong with a situation, and we can bring some positive change to it, alleviating suffering, and improving wisdom and happiness, I believe that is worth exploring. As I shared in the class, there are also necessary losses and sufferings as part of the human condition that we must seek to wisely and compassionately address, grieve, and mourn. The 1000 sorrows. I’m not sure that when you wrote I’m overly optimistic and think life should be all roses whether you meant that I’m really trying to revise Buddha’s remark: e.g, 1000 joys, 12 sorrows? That I don’t really perceive “reality” clearly, and try to skew it positively? There may be a truth in that. I do try to look for the best in each person I meet. I also try to look at the glass “half full.” But like the Zen three stanza poem we read in class, I do believe that I go “in and through” with self reflection. However, it seems that the way in which I tried to teach the class about bare awareness, necessary and unnecessary suffering, going in and through problems, and emphasizing a balanced view of positives and negatives in one’s life did not come across to you clearly. I apologize for any part of that due to my limitations in communication skills. Finally, I am intrigued by your comment that I was a “passive” instructor. I also hear that part of you felt I was too active (e.g., with homework load, reading etc). But let’s look at this part. By passive, do you mean quadrant four (passive, helpless, victim)? Or so you mean positive yielding (accepting, at peace, equanimity)? I imagine, as we discussed in the control mode dialogue, that there are both parts in me, to some extent (as there are, I believe, to some extent in everyone). My goal personally is to move from q4 to q2 and to use Q1, positive assertive, and q2, positive yielding in a wise balance. As I shared in class, I very much value the poem of Rumi, “Wherever you are, be the soul of the place.” I don’t think it’s entirely possible, at least for me, but it’s a wonderful vision, and something we can strive toward and learn about through feedback from others. In that sense, I would be curious under what situations you felt I was too passive, and what wisdom, dongjing you would have recommended in those situations which you would have felt to be wiser and more assertive than the way I behaved. Again, I’m always eager to learn and have wise suggestions. That is part of the journey of self-reflection and growth.

FINAL COMMENT. I thank you for your comments, and your intent to share in a helpful way. I hope my response might be helpful to you, and in some ways reach and touch you also. That would truly make me happy. Now, as I conclude, I give you a “Namaste” bow. I salute the deepest wisdom and compassion within you. And I truly wish you blessings of peace, happiness, joy, wisdom, and compassion on your journey.

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