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ABSTRACT

Problems caused by a teacher's inherent authority during writing conferences can be surmounted by bringing a counselor's approaches to structuring and conducting an interview with a client. First, the creation of an atmosphere of acceptance and trust is more important to the writing conference than specific teaching techniques. Second, characteristics of effective helpers must be identified, including helper empathy, helper warmth and caring, and helper regard and respect, as well openness and honesty. The helping process can be divided into six stages: (1) preparing and beginning, (2) clarifying, (3) structuring, (4) exploring (5) consolidating, and (6) planning and terminating. Finally, counselors must develop skills for listening and understanding, such as paraphrasing, perception checking, direct and indirect leading, interpreting, and summarizing. By becoming more conscious of what is involved in a helping relationship, teachers can enhance their writing conference skills. (Copies of first drafts and transcripts of the subsequent conferences are included.) (DF)

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A Counseling Approach to Writing Conferences

A burden of power often troubles our attempt to teach writing in conferences, those times when we are placed in an intimate and collaborative setting with students. Often neither we nor they are prepared for this way of teaching and learning that plainly differ from what usually happens in the classroom, with its rows of aspirants sitting at the feet of the teacher. The power of the classroom authority figure seems out of place in a conference and can hamper the kind of teaching required then. Indeed, peer tutor writing centers are flourishing in part because tutors are not encumbered by the same power. The intimacy and openness of a successful collaborative effort, Thom Hawkins writes, come more readily for peers than for teachers, whom students may be reluctant to participate with on a personal level.[1]

But I believe teachers can surmount many of the problems that their authority causes by bringing to the conference a counselor's approaches to structuring and conducting an interview with a client. The one-to-one conference is the primary work place for psychological therapists and counselors. Much of their professional research and training is devoted to understanding what happens then and to developing techniques for making conferences work. We can and should tap this profession's know-how, especially when we consider the similarities between the counselor and writing teacher.

The aim of the therapist, according to Carl Rogers, is to release a client's capacity to deal constructively with life, thereby giving that person the power to resume control and to move forward. When reading that in Rogers' Client-Centered Therapy, I was struck by the close parallel to the purpose of a writing conference on an early draft. Then the questions are essentially the same. The student may ask,

"Where do I go from here?" or admits, "I'm stuck and not sure what else to do. I don't feel I'm being successful with this assignment." The teacher's job at that point is much the same as the counselor's -- to put the student-client back in control so that she or he can move forward with a sense of clear direction. It is this power to take charge of writing, following through the stages of revision and editing, hat our beginning writers lack.

A second similarity concerns the long-term goals of conferences. The counselor and client try to go beyond the immediate problem to develop the client's self-awareness and ability to react intelligently in new situations. The goal of therapy is to prepare for the future by dealing with the present. As teachers of the writing process, we also use the immediate problems of a specific assignment as a way to develop writing skills for the future demands of new writing situations. Our help is, like the counselor's, a form of preparing the student to act independently in the future.

A third similarity concerns the relationship between the client and counselor, the student and teacher. Because the aim of therapy is to help the client be in charge of his or her own life, the therapist assumes the role of a growth facilitator rather than an authority figure who dispenses solutions or directs behavior. In a counseling relationship, the client and counselor are a collaborative team involved in what is often termed a "helping relationship." The counselor says, "Let's work together to an outcome that will help you be more in control of your life. Together we will try to understand what's bothering you and together plan how to deal with it."

In a writing conference that has as its goal the enabling of the student to take charge of the writing process, there is this same collaborative relationship. As Calvin Trillin once noted, "An editor should be someone who is trying to help the writer say what he wants to say." [2] It is much the same for a writing instructor in a conference. An important shift occurs from teacher as authority figure who judges the product of writing to someone who says, like the counselor, "I want to be involved

with you in exploring what you're trying to say in this paper and in papers in the future. Together, I want us to find ways of writing effectively."

In short, sitting down with a student in a writing conference requires a different kind of teaching. We come together with the student in an intimate setting to help that person deal constructively with sometimes intensely personal parts of life. This means that we have taken on, in important ways, the role of a counselor in an interview. It is helpful, then, if we have at our disposal some of the insights, guidelines, and tools of the counselor. This information has for years been common knowledge for others in the helping professions -- child care specialists, social workers, guidance counselors, psychologists, nurses -- and should be common knowledge for teachers as well.

An introduction to this field includes the conditions necessary for a helping relationship, characteristics of effective helpers, the stages of a conference, and the counseling skills for effective listening. The goal is to take what we are already doing naturally but perhaps unsystematically and, by becoming more conscious of what is involved in a helping relationship, to enhance our conferencing skills.

Conditions for the Helping Relationship

An often stressed point in counseling literature is that the creation of an atmosphere of acceptance and trust is more important than a counselor's specific techniques. If the client believes he or she can express feelings and attitudes freely, without threat of condemnation, then method is secondary. To create this climate, counselors use their primary helping tool -- their own personality. There are three personality traits that are frequently identified as characteristic of effective helpers, traits which are almost entirely responsible for creating the right atmosphere in a conference.[3]

Helper empathy. Like the counselor, a teacher needs a clear understanding of the reality of what the student is thinking. The communication of that reality to the

student becomes the basis of talk and lets the student feel understood. In gaining empathy, the teacher tries to become a mirror or alternate self for whatever the student thinks or feels. Empathy means "feeling into" so the teacher thinks with the student, asking "What" and "How" questions: "What does the student see in this topic?" "What does this idea mean to her?" "How does he view this problem?" Whenever students see a teacher taking the time to understand their meaning so deeply, they often gain a stronger sense of commitment to writing -- a crucial part of doing it well.

Helper warmth and caring. In a study that asked clients to identify the traits of an effective helper, there was strong agreement that the best helper is someone who responds enthusiastically to clients in a personal and concerned way.[4] A central value for these expert helpers was their stronger concern for people than for things.[5] And, indeed, the teaching of writing as process means concentrating more on writers and their writing behavior than on the product they eventually produce.

Generating this warmth and caring begins in small ways: smiling, eye contact, offering a chair, asking to take a coat, inquiring about the student's comfort. All of these signal to students that they are valued and are ways of saying, "I like you and I care about you." And when these amenities are not observed, the conference can lack a warmth and connection that might otherwise be there.

Helper regard and respect. Roger's description of this trait is "unconditional positive regard" and by it he means the student-client never feels threatened by a therapist's personal judgment.[6] There is no "I approve or disapprove of you or your writing." There is only the sense of acceptance of the individual and a willingness to help. In the first contacts especially, it is important to offer this regard and respect, saying in effect: "I want you to express yourself freely and to become the best writer you can be on your own terms and not just to please me. Furthermore, I want to be with you because you are a person and my student."

Empathy, warmth, caring, and respect are all natural qualities of effective teachers and other helpers. But the experience and research of the therapist say that we must constantly examine how much and how often we exhibit these qualities. Whether through videotapes of retraining sessions or transcripts of actual interviews, so important are these traits that professional helpers find some way to monitor them. They are the catalyst of the client's personal growth.

When an atmosphere of trust and sharing has been created, the teacher can make the shift from authority figure to collaborator, the benefits of which are impressive. There can be more genuine, two-way talk about writing, perhaps for the first time in a student's life. If the student is assured of not being demeaned or judged in a personal way, the student can commit to writing without fear of being wrong, and the sluice gates of language and ideas open more. In all, the student-writer is no longer a passive receptacle who is simply told to perform a prescribed intellectual function or repoduce the thinking of the teacher. Instead, this is someone who is ready to use writing in a personal way to discover what she or he genuinely thinks and feels about the world. The student is ready to "write for surprise," as Donald Murray puts it.[7]

There is a last advantage to creating a helping relationship, of narrowing the gap between powerless student and powerful teacher. Now the student must seriously consider a teacher's questions about the piece of writing and assume responsibility for answering them. Since the teacher will not be giving commands or dispensing solutions, the only alternative for the student is to think, write, and inquire until there is a self-discovered solution. The questions of a collaborator will be viewed in a different light than the pronouncements of authority.

Openness and Honesty

A second condition for the helping relationship is openness about its goals. In early writing conferences, a teacher can share his or her own thought process with

the student, saying for example, "In this conference and in future ones, I want us to explore how you can analyze and revise your own writing, to become eventually an independent writer." This kind of disclosure makes it clear to a student that the teacher wants to be involved in a collaborative way and, most importantly, announces the overall goal of that and other conferences. Such statements are necessary because this increase in responsibility will be unexpected for most students. Usually their writing is merely evaluated or someone simply tells them what to do. So they must be prepared, and the basis of their taking full responsibility for their writing must be laid down in a careful, explicit way.

Being upfront applies not only to the outcome of the entire conferencing process but also to the objective of a specific conference. It is important to say at the beginning: "Today I want us simply to read over your draft to see how the writing is going, whether you've found a topic that seems to be working for you. We will not consider style or mechanics. Today we want to think only about what you have to say and how to develop it." Statements like these put the student at ease by ruling out certain writing concerns and placing focus upon what is important at a given stage. Clarifying a specific goal for the conference also helps the student to internalize the habit of working on writing in stages, ignoring parts that should be considered only in a later draft.

Openness and honesty should also extend to the questions asked during a conference about a particular draft. Such questions work best when set up: "For your message to be clear to the reader, you the writer must be able to summarize it clearly. Tell me, what is the one thing you want the reader to know after reading this?" Or simply: "I'm confused about the point of this paragraph, about how all the information ties together. What is its main idea?" Revealing the purpose of questions is a simple but important technique in a collaborative effort. It helps the student to trust the teacher by making clear what is expected and in what direction the conference is headed.

"I" Language

A third condition for establishing a helping relationship is the use of "I" language to express value statements about writing not as unalterable axioms, but as what they really are -- the teacher's own ideals and reactions. This sense of sharing personal principles instead of pronouncing rules is important if the student is to have room to explore independently what works or doesn't in the writing. Also, statements framed as a teacher's subjective reactions keep responsibility on the writer by paving the way for rewriting. Often, highly negative and final judgments like "You are disorganized here" or "Your sentences don't make sense" can cut off a student's willingness to do meaningful revision, and a superficial "fix it" approach is all that can follow. To protect the ego, the student is forced to disassociate from such a faulty product.

Perhaps most importantly, using the language of "I" allows the teacher to react to the writing in a non-threatening way. For example, saying to a student, "You are inconsistent in your use of tenses" or "Your structure falls apart here" implies a negative judgment of the writer as well as the writing. But the language of "I" allows the teacher to reflect the reality of the situation: personal reactions to a piece of writing, not a person. On the other hand are statements that focus on the reader and the writing: "I read this sentence but don't feel I understand exactly what it was saying"; "When the tense of the verbs in this paragraph change, I get confused"; or "I think I understand what you're saying but I need more development." These signal that the teacher is inside the student's writing and is simply sharing responses as a reader without passing judgment on it or sentencing the writer to a prison of revision. The language of "I" thus allows the student to participate in a sharing conference with the threat to ego greatly reduced.

Stages in the Helping Process

By dividing the helping process into distinct stages, each with its own goals and techniques, counselors carefully bring about the conditions for a helping relationship. The steps below, adapted from Lawrence Brammer's manual The Helping Relationship, provide a systematic way to structure writing conferences.

Stage one is preparing and entry, in which the teacher tries to open a conference with a minimum of resistance from the student, a resistance often caused by the fear of confronting weaknesses in front of a stranger, especially an authority figure. There is also the student's discomfort in knowing that the work ahead will be difficult and will require change in the way the student sees himself or herself as a writer. An apprehension toward change because of its threat to a fixed ego structure can be a deep source of anxiety for young writers.

A second goal in the entry stage is to establish an atmosphere of warmth and intimacy. Techniques include the little touches of welcome mentioned before -- saying "good to see you," offering a chair, asking about comfort and health -- and also a minute or two of small talk which relaxes the student, humanizes the teacher, and can indicate academic or personal difficulties that may interfere with the student's writing. Once the conference is underway, a teacher must know when the student is resisting or delaying and to confront him or her with that behavior: "You seem to be just sitting there and not responding. What is that doing for you?" or "You seem to be arguing with me about these points instead of talking. Do you get that sense too?"

In the next stage of clarification an obvious goal is to make explicit the purpose of the conference ("Today I want us to focus on ...") and perhaps future conferences. But a second goal is to elicit the student's reactions to the assignment and the problems encountered in writing. Before reading a draft, a teacher can simply ask, "What problems did you have? Tell me how the writing is going for you." This is a profitable step that is often absent when the teacher simply

takes over at the beginning of a conference. As the following manuscripts show, when encouraged even beginning writers can be precise about their successes and failure in a paper. And there is a noticeable psychological benefit when the student, not the teacher, first calls attention to faults in a draft.

During this clarification, the teacher should suspend judgment and help the student to elaborate and clarify statements, simply listening and reflecting what the student says. Suspending diagnosis allows the teacher to enter into the perceptual framework of the student and to view the writing with the student's eyes, gaining the first condition of a helping relationship -- empathy. In this stage, counselors try to use "what" questions, which call for elaboration and clarification, instead of "why" questions, which call for analysis.

In the third stage of structuring, the teacher makes clear the process of the conference and in what ways the student should participate in it. The student must know his or her exact role: to share in talk and questions that will lead to self-discovery of problems in the writing and directions that can be taken. This psychological preparation is important. Unlike in the classroom, students in a conference may not be sure of their role, whether they should be passive as in a medical examination, or active as in an open conversation. Spending adequate time in the structure stage helps students resolve this ambiguity and also allows the teacher to build another of those conditions necessary for a helping relationship -- honesty and openness.

The next stage of exploration can be divided into two parts, the first being a reading of the zero draft. I like to hold the draft in both hands and read it aloud without stopping, making it sound effective as possible without altering what the student has written nor hiding any difficulty in following the sentences. After reading, I hand the draft back to the student and make an encouraging comment. No instructions or notations have been written on the draft. Each part of this procedure deserves some explanation.

lding the draft in both hands prevents the teacher from stopping to write notations and thus promotes a holistic judgment of how the different parts of the writing work together. It is difficult to get at the fundamental problems, those below the surface of the writing, when pausing to comment on its separate parts. An effective gestalt of the paper comes more dependably through an uninterrupted reading. The few problems which remain in the mind afterwards are ordinarily the most important ones to address at that point in the essay's development. This happens naturally when we approach writing in stages, moving logically down the hierarchy of focus and development to organization to style and finally to mechanics in a series of conferences and drafts. There is a second reason for a holistic reading. By watching the teacher respond to the whole draft, a student comes to believe that good writing is more than just smooth sentences and grammatical correctness, and practices along with the teacher the important habit of paying attention to the right thing at the right time. The teacher thus models for the student the reality of the audience: someone who wants to see through the parts of the writing and understand a message contained in the whole piece.

Reading the paper aloud is also useful. Hearing their written language is probably a first for most young writers. The experience certainly plays to their oral/aural strengths, and seeing a teacher involved with their language and thoughts is such an active way affirms that this writing business is important and something the teacher cares about. Perhaps most importantly, when students hear their words read aloud, the piece gains a performance value it doesn't have when silent. Once the paper's objective status in the real world is confirmed, given a birth so to speak, the student must make a commitment to this offspring, a commitment which is one key to serious work on a piece of writing.

The need to balance negative with positive comments is obvious. As teachers whose daily task it is to evaluate writing, criticism is commonplace for us, but for students it can be threatening and demeaning, even when not intended to be. In an

effective conference, the teacher should make a direct attempt to defuse this tension and urge students to feel hopeful, for a legitimate reason, about their writing. Without that hope, composing can become based on a fear of error that, when strong enough, chokes off genuine work on a piece and blocks the use of writing as an instrument of discovery.

In the second part of the exploration stage the bulk of conference work takes place. Until now the teacher has been trying to understand how the student approaches the assignment and what writing problems the student perceives. But now the teacher becomes more active and assertive. An effective technique in this stage is to ask a series of questions that encourage the student to explore his or her own writing and develop a self-awareness of what can and should be done. The transcripts below illustrate some of these questions. First come general questions that test how much insight a student has into the thought and writing problems in the draft. More specific questions follow that help the student probe the different issues that need to be resolved. Soon it becomes clear what advice and instruction the student needs. The strategy has made the student receptive to that instruction by creating a psychological need for resolution to questions that have been asked in the context of a specific piece of writing.

After asking a question, it is sometimes necessary to wait three to five seconds for a response. The student's silence is not always a resistive act or a signal of the inability to participate. At the beginning of the semester some students simply wait to see if the teacher will answer his or her own question, as teachers sometimes do. But many students just are not used to thinking and talking about their writing, so they honestly may need time to perform this unusual activity. Furthermore, pausing a few seconds announces that the teacher is now ready to listen and to understand.

The next stage of consolidation flows from the exploratory stage and is usually a part of it. The student and teacher conclude what specifically needs to be done in

the writing and talk about how to solve those problems. The teacher gives instruction, provides examples or suggests materials, whatever guidance the student requires.

The purpose of the last stage, planning and termination, is to provide a sense of closure. The accomplishments of the conference or series of conferences are summarized in light of the goals that were set out. A helpful procedure is to ask the student to summarize what he or she has learned and now intends to do. If the other stages have unfolded satisfactorily, the student should be able to verbalize what changes will be made in the writing. Planning also includes setting deadlines and anticipating the next conference. By both summarizing accomplishments and looking forward to the next stage in writing, a teacher can let the student leave the conference with a sense of moving forward, of having taken definite steps toward a final outcome.

Skills for Listening and Understanding

Counselors must develop several clusters of skills -- those for providing comfort, intervening in a crisis, modifying behavior, leading clients to solve personal problems and make life-decisions for themselves. However, the first set of skills they learn are those for understanding the client and for helping that person understand himself or herself. Five of these skills for listening and understanding are discussed below: paraphrasing, perception checking, leading, interpreting, and summarizing.

It seems odd to talk about what comes naturally -- just listening to and understanding what someone says. But the kind of listening required in a counseling interview or writing conference is different. The intensive listening needed then is not a passive process but an active one, calling for sharply focused attention and sensitivity to the words and behavior of another. Developing this sensitivity is a matter of listening to meanings beneath the words, tone, and gestures of a speaker,

or in psychologist Theodor Reik's well-known phrase, "listening with the third ear."[8] By this he means seeing behind what someone is saying or doing to the meanings or perceptions that are producing that behavior.

A technique for developing the third ear is to ask oneself questions while listening: "What is this person's message to me?" "What is he trying to say to me with those words and that tone?" "What does she want me to know about her?" So strong is the tendency to impose our own structure or meaning on what someone says that this conscious effort is required to be open to the reality of what someone is saying.

Such concentration upon the person's real meaning is characteristic of effective helpers, for it provides what Carl Rogers calls "the recognition and acceptance of feeling." With this kind of listening we cultivate a sensitivity that allows a truer understanding and acceptance of others. Most importantly, the very experience of being listened to in this way is strongly therapeutic in itself. We have the power to further growth in others, whether it be growth in writing or emotional growth, simply by being a sympathetic listener who does nothing else but helps others understand themselves.[9]

Paraphrasing, the first listening skill, is an attempt to restate the student's basic message in similar but fewer words. It allows the teacher to test an understanding of what was said, show the student this understanding, and help the student to clarify what she or he thinks and feels. An example from marital counseling:

> Client: When we are out with our friends he thinks it is very funny to tell them about something that I did he thinks stupid. Sometimes I just want to crawl under the rug.
>
> Counselor: You feel humiliated and ashamed. I can see how you might.[10]

Here the counselor has simply paraphrased the client's message and added a statement of empathy. The result is a deep sense of being understood for the client and an

invitation to say more. This next example from a conference in a writing center is similar:

Student: I'm gonna flunk English 100. The teacher gives me an F on a paper and tells me to write it again. I write it again and get another F.

Teacher: You really seem frustrated. You turn in a paper and you are told to write it again.

Student: I don't mind writing it again. It's not knowing what he wants.

The example also illustrates full listening to a person's message and then a reflection of it. Feeling understood in turn encourages the student to probe deeper, to elaborate. Paraphrasing is thus a potent instrument for opening the channels of self-insight.

Perception checking is different from paraphrasing in that the teacher first admits confusion, then guesses the student's basic message and asks for an affirmation of that guess. In this way, perception checking helps the student to bring vague thoughts into sharper focus and clears the way for an accurate understanding of the student's thought. The following example brings together a paraphrase and a check of perception:

Teacher: You have a lot to say about hospitals. Let's try to bring it together. What would you say is the thesis of your essay?

Student: About how most people are afraid of hospitals because they're afraid of what doctors might do to hurt them.

Teacher: So, the thesis is "fear of hospitals is caused by fear of pain."

Student: That's the big part. But also there's just not knowing what will happen to them.

Teacher: O.K. Is that a part of the thesis? A second reason for the fear of hospitals -- anxiety or fear of the unknown. Is that part

of it, too?

Student: Sure, you're in danger, at least so far as your health, and you're afraid of not getting well. It's hard when you don't know, waiting there.

The exchange indicates the value of suspending evaluation while merely trying to understand fully and precisely what the student wishes to say. In this way, the teacher facilitates the student's own discovery and clarification of thought in his or her own words.

To lead is to invite verbal expression along desired lines. The goal of indirect leading is to get the student started and to keep responsibility on him or her for keeping the conference going. An example would be: "Perhaps we could start by your telling me how this assignment went for you," a statement which gives the student the responsibility for identifying what needs to be dealt with first. Later on, indirect leading would take the form of "Tell me more about that" followed by an expectant look. A direct lead, on the other hand, asks the student for precise information: "Are there other causes for the fear of hospitals?" or "Give me a specific example of that." Both indirect and direct leading encourage the student to elaborate, clarify, or illustrate what was said. And, because of the open-ended questions and statements used, both forms of leading keep responsibility on the student for clarifying and developing his or her own thought.

When interpreting, the teacher adds an understanding to what the student has said, thereby helping the student to see thoughts and words in a new and perhaps clearer way. Interpreting is an important process for writers who are struggling to find out what they actually believe and wish to say. While interpreting helps the student discover meaning, it also teaches the habit of forming insights through reflection upon what has been written. An interpretation should be labelled as the teacher's own viewpoint or opinion and stated in the form of a question. Both of these guidelines give the interpretation a more tentative quality than a declarative

statement and make the interpretation less dogmatic and risky. The student, in effect, reserves the option of rejecting or accepting it. An example:

> Teacher: So, your point is that with abortion a woman's right to her own body shouldn't be an issue. I think you're wanting to say in a way: when she's having an abortion, a woman isn't exercising the same right to her own body as when she chooses to have her tonsils or appendix removed. Does that get close to what you were saying?

Interpretation can thus provide students a deeper understanding of their thoughts as a result of the added perceptions of the teacher.

The purpose of summarizing is to give the student a sense of moving carefully through a conference step-by-step and to consolidate the progress made. A student usually can and should do some of the summarizing. A teacher might ask: "How does our work look to you at this point? Try to pull it together briefly" or "Sum up for me what you'll be doing with this paper in the next draft." Summarizing thus tests a student's understanding as well as keeps responsibility for the writing on the student. At times the teacher may wish to do the review, especially mid-point during a conference: "So far we've talked about developing your thesis with more examples. Now let's give some attention to the order of those paragraphs." Finally, a summary of a previous conference can be used at the beginning of a new one to provide continuity: "In our last conference we talked about making the paragraphs fuller and more focused. Let's see how they came out."

Transcripts of Zero Draft Conferences

Some of the techniques for questioning and for listening and understanding can be seen in the following transcripts of actual conferences, each of which is preceded by a zero draft. The drafts come from the first assignment during the fall semester of a freshman composition course. Throughout the semester students read groups of essays from a thematic reader. The basis of the writing presented here was a group of

essays about "self." While reading the essays and discussing them in class, students were also writing a series of journal assignments on the same topic. At the end of their preparation, students were asked to review their class notes and journals, choose a slant or theme that seemed promising, and develop it into essay form.

Most students followed three steps for each paper: the zero draft, a revision, and a final version. In the zero draft, students practiced simply exploring their message in depth and developin it fully. They tried to write quickly without editing themselves so that they could experience the free flow of thought in language. To keep from wasting time, we talked about mechanics only after the essay's theme, content, and movement were set.

The conversation from the entry, clarification, and structuring stages of the conference has been omitted from these transcripts. As a result, the first five minutes are missing during which the student and teacher settled down during the entry stages, discussed the assignment and the goals of the conference during the clarification stages, and anticipated the following questions, their purpose, and how to respond to them during the structuring stage -- all of which took place before the reading of the zero draft and the exploration and summary that followed. The essays and the transcripts are reprinted with permission of the student authors.

Notes

[1]"Intimacy and Audience: The Relationship Between Revision and the Social Dimension of Peer Tutoring," College English, 30 (1980), 64-68.

[2]As quoted in Alice Trilling, "A Writer's Process: A Conversion with Calvin Trilling," Basic Writing, 3 (1981), 15.

[3]For a review of the literature see A. W. Combs and D. W. Soper, "The Helping Relationship as Described by "Good" and "Poor" Teachers," Journal of Teacher Education, 14 (1963), 64-67; and "Perceptual Organization of Effective Counselors," Journal of Counseling Psychology, 10 (1963), 222-226.

[4]Lawrence Brammer, The Helping Relationship: Process and Skills (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), pp. 29-35.

[5]A. W. Combs et al., Florida Studies in the Helping Professions, Univ. of Florida Social Science Monograph No. 37 (Gainesville, Fla.: Univ. of Florida Press, 1969).

[6]On Becoming a Person (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), pp. 283-284.

[7]"Writing and Teaching for Surprise," College English, 46 (1984), 1-7.

[8]Listening with the Third Ear (New York: Grove Press, 1948).

[9]A. W. Combs, D. L. Avila and W. W. Purkey, Helping Relationships: Basic Concepts for the Helping Professions (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971), p. 194.

[10]Ibid.

Conference with Michele

Zero Draft

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It is interesting to observe how people become attached to places. Whether it is a vacation spot, a hideaway, a building or a room, a person can associate a concrete area of space with special memories that eventually endear that place to the person's heart. This special fondness for a particular place is usually dependent on what the person did at the place, what kind of mood he or she was in, the company who was also there, and the time of day and season of the year.

There are several places with which I have associated some warm and beautiful memories. Of course everyone has good feelings about the shore, or the mountains, or a particular city or state, and I am no exception, but I also have strong feelings about a place that is special because of its simplicity and its uniqueness. If you are walking south down Fifth Avenue a sturdy red brick house with a green lawn and leafy oak, maple, and cherry trees will come into view. My special place, shaded by these trees is right there -- the side porch of Tony's house.

When I think of this porch I do not associate it with any one particular incident. Rather it becomes synonomous with an array of happy, secure, and comfortable feelings. It becomes linked with the carefree, pressureless, summer season -- more specifically with summer twilight when the air was warm and a cool breeze would sway the branches of the willowy trees. The stars would slowly be appearing like bright pin points of sparkling light, and the moon would glow among them in the black velvet sky.

That porch becomes associated with Tony, his brown hair gently ruffled by the breeze, his brown eyes serious and thoughtful one moment then laughing and teasing the next. I recall our conversations covering anything and everything, yet as mellow and calm as the dusky night. Our feet dangled against the brick base as we sat on the blue-gray wooden slates talking about our opinions, thoughts, dreams, and desires. An aura of serenity surrounded us, and we felt relaxed, secure, and fulfilled with each other and within ourselves.

That side porch will always remain special because of the emotions I experienced as we sat there together. Now even when I am feeling rushed, uncertain, and under pressure, all I need is warm air with a cool fresh breeze and I am instantly back on that side porch feeling tranquil, self-assured and happy again. And as long as dusky warm summer nights exist my memories of that special place will as well.

Inst: Umm, this is quite pretty in places. I mean in a good way. Very gentle. How do you like it?

Michele: I don't know. I had a problem. At times it, well, it just doesn't, I don't know, didn't flow.

Inst. So you didn't think the sentences went together very well?

Michele: No, it's not that. It's hard to explain, but the words just weren't the right ones.

Inst: I see. Can you point to a spot where you had that problem? It's hard to, I know, but if --

Michele: (interrupting) Here where I say "happy, secure." (turns pages) "Aura of serenity." Those words just don't . . . I don't know (shakes her head).

Inst: I think I know what you mean. And we even have a phrase for it: "Now, don't tell." All those adjectives were trying to talk but just can't very well. Remember when we did the ladder of abstraction in class? A beautiful place → a hideaway → a hideaway in the Bahamas → a palm tree beach of white sands in the Bahamas"? You just need to pick a "for instance" that will bring you down that ladder. In that second or third paragraph when you say "I don't remember any one time on the porch" — well, maybe in the next draft you could let yourself do that at that point. It's O.K. to generalize some; just make sure it's attached to a specific time. Pick a "for instance" -- a one time when you and Tony were on that porch and then describe it in such a way that I get the idea of that island of serenity, peace, comfort, belonging — all that stuff. (Pause) What do you think?

Michele: O.K., I can do that.

Inst: How do you like your introduction?

Michele: I guess it's all right.

Inst: Me, too. I like the way you began in a slightly general way and made some pretty valid observations. Good job. Introductions are hard for me. It's tough to get in between being too direct and not direct enough. Yours seems just right to me. Anything else you want to talk about?

Michele: No, I guess not.

Conference with Walt

Zero Draft

Some people have different things which motivate them. Some people have memories locked away, only to be opened if they chose. Others are able to adapt to different enviro ents and others have little nick-nacks which they must do every day of there lives or they don't feel complete. I on the other-hand have made one fatal mistake. I have fallen in love. Now don't get me wrong I'm not putting it down but what effects it has put on me is what I'm putting down. I have been seeing this girl now for about 3 year. We have seen a lot together some good and some bad. What hurts deep down inside the most is that this little 5'4" inch girl, a hundred and 10 pounds has so much controll over this 6'1" 240 pound guy. When we first went out I was always the secure individual. She would always get upset, she was always the one to become easily hurt. But now things have changed. Once a very strong willed person I fined myself not able to go through a day without talking to her. I love this girl but the one thing Lisa Ingrid Sonderburg has done is make me weak. I hate her because she is able to be away from me for months at a time and think nothing of it. I was once a person who would be able to put aside those feelings, suppress them and go on with my life. But now the tables are turned, she is able to hang up on me when we get in an argument from Rhode Island when I'm here and think nothing of it. Things I fear have changed between Lisa and I. I can tell by the way she talks. The first week she was very happy to here from me now it seems like I'm a burden when I call. She has also change in a number of thing that we talked about before we left for school. Now she tells me to go out and talk to other girls find out if I'm really the one for her. And she tells me that she wants to find out if I am the one. Thats not wrong by no means. She has her own life, but she forgot about one thing me. Its not like we have not been seperated before. We have been for months at a time. But things I sense, things a feel. I made my decision when I left Glen Rock who I was going through life with. I spent every cent I had on something I thought ment more than a graduation present. But now you know the bad side of love. I was once able to stand tall without her because I knew she was there, but now thin are different. I have no will, no inspiration to go on. I left it all with her. She took the one part which I really needed. Now all I can do is hope. I know this is one thing I wish she didn't do to me. Well this is one aspect of love that is very painful and I dare compare it to the pain I felt when I had my shoulder operated on! The most painful experience I ever felt. I think I found something to top it. But there is only one problem a doctor can't fix this. I fear this will never mend.

Inst: This is going to be an important paper for you. A chance to write about, kind of work out on paper something important that's happening to you. What do you think you want to do to it in the next draft?

Walt: Well, I need to go back and make it impersonal. To take the I's out of it , not my opinions.

Inst: Uh, well, that's interesting. How will doing that help your paper?

Walt: I don't know; it's just what I was always told. You can't have "I" in a paper.

Inst: O.K. Let's revise that advice a little. With some subjects the use of "I" is called for, required really. Not using "I" in these cases would be incorrect. With other subjects, using "I" gets in the way and is not appropriate. Using "I" would be wrong with these subjects. Let's illustrate: "A Report to the Mayor on Drug Use in the Bethlehem City School District." Would you use "I"?

Walt: No.

Inst: This one -- "The Adjustments a College Freshman Must Make." "I"?

Walt: Well, you would, might. No, you would be giving an opinion about all freshmen.

Inst: How might you support that opinion?

Walt: O.K. -- I could talk about my -- sure.

Inst: So the answer is maybe "I" could be used in moderation. Another: "The Effects of My Relationship with Lisa on My Life"?

Walt: Yeah.

Inst: How much?

Walt: Well, pretty much all the way.

Inst: O.K., now you've made a decision about what to do with "I". What else are you going to do to this paper? What else does it need?

Walt: I think that I would jump around, talking about this and then an effect. It seems confused, jumpy.

Inst: You've got good insights into your own writing, Walt. That's going to be important. Let's talk about how you can organize this paper. What is your writing goal? Complete this for me: "My purpose is to get the reader to see . . . ."

Walt: The effects of what happened with Lisa on my life.

Inst: O.K. Let's talk about those effects a little bit and get them clear. You said there's been a loss of will. What did you mean exactly?

Walt: Sometimes I just can't do anything. I don't care.

Inst: Tell me something specific that you feel you should care about but don't.

Walt: School. I'm not studying, not studying real good. I open the book and pretty soon I'm sitting there thinking about Lisa, what she's doing, and can't read or anything.

Inst: So you can't concentrate on school work.

Walt: Not just that. Everything. Even the coaches have told me to get with it or forget it, forget the scholarship.

Inst: Were you two engaged? Is that what you meant about spending the money? Was it a ring?

Walt: Yeah, she still has it too.

Inst: I can see why it's hard for you to concentrate, to get connected with your studies and football. You've been hurt.

Walt: Yeah. I don't know.

Inst: Well, let's try to pull these together and work at them that way. I think you ought to begin with the specific effects - school work and football - and let them lead to the overall effect - the loss of wanting to do anything, the motivation. That's the one that explains the other two. But, before you get to the effects, what's the very first thing the reader must know?

Walt: Oh, about Lisa. Who she is and that?

Inst: Exactly. What is the next question the reader would have?

Walt: How long we knew each other and about falling in love and that.

Inst: Now what?

Walt: What happened when I came to school.

Inst: Right, the current status of the relationship - the break-up. And now, the most important points, the body of your essay would be?

Walt: The things it's made me do. What's happening.

Inst: Right, Walt, the effects we talked about. This is basically a cause and affect approach. You give the background, tell the cause, the event, and then analyze the effects. That's good. Be clear about each effect. Make each one distinct and important. Maybe even in separate paragraphs. That would help your reader keep them separate and help you develop them with more detail. O.K., Walt, how do you feel about it?

Walt: I think I know what to do.

Inst: You know, you're doing some pretty sophisticated things with language - the comparison of the weight and height of the girl with yours and yet control is reversed. The way you work in her actual name in the flow of the paper. The pain of the shoulder operation and this break-up. And then that last sentence. That has got to be the last sentence of your essay. The double sense of "mend" - good stuff. Be sure to keep that kind of freshness and vividness in. O.K., Walt, have a go at the next draft. I'll see you in class in a little bit.

Walt: Well, actually only ten minutes. Are you going to be late again?

Inst: Hey, gimme a break! No, thanks, Walt. I'll get used to this crazy schedule in a week or so. I hope. You better hope.

Conference with Bill

Zero Draft

Challenge is an important part of life in many ways. It can be seen in many forms. The challenge to excel is one form. Standing by your morals despite circumstances, and preserving what you are is another challenge. Overcoming some fear that is within us all is another. The will to live is based on overcoming these challenges, and for many it is destroyed by not overcoming.

Overcoming a fear is an important challenge in my life. I have had many fears in life but my greatest fear was that of heights. I really became afraid of them because when I was small, I fell from a tree. I didn't get seriously injured but the possibility must have stayed in my mind the heights could cause pain. The way I overcame the fear is really very simple and I feel foolish about it simpleness. One day, my best friend David Rasmussen said he could climb higher into our crab-apple tree than I could, and he was willing to bet a buck. I had a reputation of never refusing a dare so I had to do it. I started very slowly picking my way among all the branches I thought were there. I was nearly petrified, but I wasn't gonna lose a dollar on a dare. I eventually worked my way to the top, at least 10 feet over the head of David. So I did two things that day. I won a buck (big money at the time. I was only about 8), and I overcame my fear of heights.

A challenge of performance is a unique thing in that it is so easy to fail yet so hard to excel. I felt the pressure to excel my first year on the high school basketball team because I went to John F. Kennedy Memorial High School with a reputation of being a very good defensive player. Right away Coach Newman (or Shovelhead as was his nickname) put me on one of our top offensive guards, Keith McSorley. He had alot of experience on me because he was a junior and I was only a sophomore. I really struggled at first. Keith hit about 4 or 5 shots, real burners, before I really got woke up and realized it wasn't like Junior High. JH was real easy, most stupid guards who did predictable things. But Keith was really smart on the offensive end. Slowly but surely I began to play to my usual level of defensive skill. A steal here a blocked pass or shot there and I really made him work for the buckets he did get. At the end of practice my first day, I got a compliment that really sticks in my head. Shovelhead said if I could make plays like that on Keith, I could handle most guards in the country. I beared his prediction out and made all-defensive team 2 years on JV and my senior year I had a good season. So I did perform to a level I was expected to achieve, and my challenge to excel was overcome.

Maintaining your character is a difficult thing to do. This is because of such a plethora of factors involving every decision you make. Family, friends, girl/boy friends, teachers, and neighbors are only a few of the people who influence your character details. Once your basic morals are set, maintaining them at all cost is a difficult, but not impossible deed. I had very few occasions where my morals and character had to withstand an assault. There was a time when I had to stand up and fight for what I felt was right. I happened one night when a group of my friends were at an arcade, and began to be harassed by local "dirt bags (DB's"). We were determined to hold our ground but weren't gonna cause trouble. One of the DB's came forward and starting, not just saying, but shouting obscenities at the crowd of us. His name was John Gaffeney. It was too much for all of us, and especially me because I have a short fuse, so I charged him and got caught with a right to the jaw. I was so mad I never ever felt it until later. I slammed him into a game and someone broke up the fight. We all left and went to the Triangle, where most fist fights take place. Most of the details are fuzzy, but I had about 4 or 5 bruises and a dislocated thumb afterward, but John had two real bright shiners. I had pain but there was no way I would admit it to anyone. My bruises were on my ribs and easy to conceal. The only thing people could see wrong was a swollen thumb. I had stood up for what was right and refused to quit. I had to accept the consequences of my standing up for morality without cries of pain or any complaint. My moral character was maintained despite physical setbacks.

Inst: That was fun. You described these things, these challenges so well that I was pretty much right there. Where are you going with this now? What's your next step?

Bill: Well, obviously I need to go back and tighten these paragraphs up. The sentences need to be fit together so that the writing flows and the points are clear. Then maybe some work on grammar and punctuation. Maybe spelling.

Inst: Well, that's quite a bit. I like the idea of working on coherence before grammar, making those sentences relate to each other and focused on a point. That's good. Let's take a look at...let me ask you about your introduction.

Bill: Yeah, yeah, I know. The sentences are really loose. I knew what I wanted to say but took too long to say it. I'll take care of that.

Inst: Good. You know what you want to say now. That happens a lot in writing. You write to find out what you want to say and then go back and revise. How about the order of those sentences?

Bill: Yeah, the challenges in the first paragraph need to be in the same order like in the paper. They need to be connected too.

Inst: I agree. One should reflect the other. Anything else?

Bill: What do you think?

Inst: Well, the fight scene was fun - entertaining - but I wasn't sure what I was supposed to conclude after I read it.

Bill: O.K., I know what to do.

Inst: All right, I like the direction you're working in - more coherence, focused thesis. It's an interesting topic. Good luck on it.

Bill: Can I use the word "dirt bags" and then "DB's"? I mean, that's what we really called them. That's their name.

Inst: Do you have another choice?

Bill: I guess not. It's just that I didn't know if you could use that in an essay.

Inst: You mean you're worried about slang? I think you're O.K. because you're using it to add color. Maybe if you just added a bit of explanation. You know, "DB's - hoodlums who were usually looking for trouble." That way you're saying to your reader, "Hey, I know that's a slang term."

Zero Draft

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Growing up in Chatham, New Jersey.

I live in a small town in Northern New Jersey named Chatham. Chatham is very old and historical. George Washington marched over one of our bridges and slept in one of the old hotels in Chatham. Chatham is about 2 miles wide and long. The social life for teenagers is very boring because there is nothing to do. There are no "hang outs", no bowling alleys, no pizza parlors, no movie theatres in other words there is nothing to do. The adults at least have somethings to do. There are social gatherings, parties and clubs. The only thing about Chatham that annoys me is that people are so concerned about their wealth and looks. The entire town consists of 18 beauty parlors and 12 banks. There is 1 restaurant that it costs 30 dollars to walk in the door and around another 150 dollars to eat. People are obsessed with eating at this restaurant. People in Chatham cannot go anywhere without looking thoroughly beautiful. They can't even go out to get there newspaper without wearing their preppy green and pink robes wondering how many people are looking at them. Chatham is a 1950 republican town. There are no blacks in Chatham nor are there any Jewish familys in Chatham. Chatham is a very stereotyped town and I feel deprived growing up in Chatham, NJ. For example, I once went to Six Flags with my friends and a girl from Verona who wanted to beat me up because they found out that another girl was going. They asked me if I had felt the same way. It really made me think about how I have never had to face that situation. These girls really did want to kill me. I guess that we were from the different backgrounds of schools that we each had come from and thats why we had such different attitudes about fighting. Well they didn't kill me and we started talking they said that there school had 6,000 kids and there were policeman patroling the corridors. Me coming from a high school of 400 with no policeman and total freedom was amazed.

The main advantage of living in Chatham is that is is a very safe town. There are very few robberies, and there has never been any murders. The town has an excellent police staff that patrols every street all the time. If there is a fire or anything like that the entire and I mean entire fire department and rescue squad will be at your house in a matter of seconds. Also another main advantage of growing up in Chatham is that we have a tremendous school system. Our school system is one of the highest in public school ratings in the entire state of New Jersey. Our high school is very small and education is pushed to the maximum. In my graduating class I had 118 kids in my class. There was a 97% percentage of seniors went on to college and the remaining 3% went on to the workforce. There has been higher requirements set for graduating and our grading system is based on a 7 point span unlike our neighboring town which are on a 10 point span.

Chatham is a town that is pretty close to everything. Our neighboring town Summit has great shops and malls. The Short Hills Mall is about 5 minutes from my house. In another town they have a bunch of shops and its called the Murray Hill Square. The Newark airport is about 15 minutes from my house. Another great thing is that we are 20 minutes from New York City. There are easily access public trans-

portation to and from the state of New York. New York is a great state and it makes visiting so easy when you are so close. We would walk up to the train station which is about 5 minutes from my house and then take the train into the city.

Taylor: Nice. I think I know a lot about Chatham, New Jersey now. What do you think about it?

Tammy: I like it. I think it says pretty much what I want it to.

Taylor: Good. What are you going to do with it now?

Tammy: Fix it. I think I have a lot of run ons, run on sentences. Then grammar and stuff.

Taylor: Yeah, you could tell I had trouble reading sometimes because of the run ons. Anything else that you're going to work on besides the grammar and punctuation?

Tammy: No, I think that's pretty much it.

Taylor: As you rewrite it, Tammy, what are you going to do with the paragraphs? How will you divide them?

Tammy: Into advantages and disadvantages.

Taylor: I see. Two big paragraphs on those or separate ones?

Tammy; Just two big ones where I can talk about them together at once.

Taylor: Yeah, doing that would certainly bring things together. What will be the effect on your developing those advantages and disadvantages if you put them all in the same paragraph?

Tammy: No, a paragraph on the first the advantages and then the disadvantages.

Taylor: I'm sorry. I meant what would be the effect on development if you put all the advantages in one paragraph and all the disadvantages into another?

Tammy: Hmmm, yeah. I just need to talk about each one in different paragraphs.

Taylor: I think so. It would help me to keep them clear and you'd probably be more likely to put in more detail. What else? What else are you going to work on?

Tammy: Just that and the grammar.

Taylor: How about your introduction? Are you happy with it?

Tammy: Well, yeah, it's O.K. I just talk a little about the advantages and disadvantages and then do it some more later.

Taylor: What is the effect of repeating what is in the introduction later on in the body of the paper?

Tammy: I guess not too good. It seems dumb, but I've got to have something there.

Taylor: O.K., what exactly should be in an introductory paragraph?

Tammy: The thesis.

Taylor: Are you going to just begin with the thesis statement right off? That's all?

Tammy: No, how boring!

Taylor: Right, you've got to have something else. You've got to bring the reader in and get her involved first. How can you do that?

Tammy: Hmmm, I don't know.

Taylor: Well, it's hard to -------

Tammy: (interrupting) I just need something right before the thesis to kind of introduce things.

Taylor: Right. Arouse my curiosity about Chatham. My interest. Set the scene a little and then the thesis. Anything else?

Tammy: I don't know.

Taylor: What about your conclusion?

Tammy: Oh, yeah. God, I don't even have one. It just ends sudden like chopped off with going to the city. I didn't know what to write.

Taylor: What can you do?

Tammy: Just sum things up.

Taylor: What was your opinion of giving just a thesis in your introduction and nothing else.

Tammy: Oh, yeah. Bore-ing!

Taylor: So you need something else for the conclusion.

Tammy: Oooh, what?

Taylor: Yeah, conclusions are rough. Look at our textbook's suggestions. It lists the different types. The big thing is to give your reader a sense of having gotten something of value out of reading your essay. What else?

Tammy: I don't know. What do you think?

Taylor: What about the business about the fighting at Six Flags? I didn't see how that related really well with the thesis. Does it need its own paragraph?

Tammy: Yeah, I was kind of confusing things when I wrote that. O.K., I'll fix it.

Taylor: O.K., Tammy, you've got a lot that you can work on. Basically I need more organization, more of a beginning, development, conclusion approach. Right now things are kind of too tossed together for me to follow them.

Tammy: I can do it. I can fix it.

A CHECKLIST OF COUNSELING CONCEPTS AND SKILLS FOR WRITING CONFERENCES

Conditions for the Helping Relationship

1. An atmosphere of acceptance and trust
   . Helper empathy
   . Helper warmth and caring
   . Helper positive regard and respect

2. An openness about the goals and process of the relationship

3. The language of "I"

Stages in the Writing Conference

Stage 1: Preparing and Entry

Goals: (1) to open the conference with a minimum of resistance
(2) to lay the groundwork of trust

Techniques: (1) use amenities to let student feel valued
(2) listen to chit-chat for hints of academic or personal problems that may interfere with writing

Stage 2: Clarification

Goals: (1) to define the goals of the conference(s)
(2) to elicit student's reaction to the writing

Techniques: (1) suspend diagnosis and encourage student's elaboration
(2) ask "what" instead of "why" questions

Stage 3: Structuring

Goal: (1) to make explicit the roles and responsibilities of the student and teacher
(2) to indicate the steps to be followed in reaching the goal of the conference

Stage 4: Exploration

Goals: (1) to read the draft holistically
(2) to encourage the student to explore his own thoughts and writing
(3) to help the student identify specific writing problems

Techniques: (1) read the draft aloud, without stopping for comments or written notations
(2) use general and specific questions that lead the student to an expanded self-awareness of the writing

Stage 5: Consolidation

Goals: (1) to state specifically what needs to be done to the writing
(2) to provide explanation and teach skills for revising

Stage 6: Planning and Termination

Goals: (1) to summarize the accomplishments of the conference(s)
(2) to set deadlines and anticipate the next conference

Techniques: (1) ask the student to bring together for himself the outcomes of the conference
(2) talk about the next conference in order to give a sense of moving forward positively and working toward a future goal

Skills for Listening and Understanding ("Listening with the third ear")

1. Paraphrasing

Purposes: (1) to restate the student's message in similar but fewer words
(2) to test one's understanding of what was said
(3) to show the student he has been understood

Guidelines: (1) Listen for the basic message of the student
(2) Restate to the student a concise and simple summary of the basic message
(3) Observe a cue or ask for a response from the student that confirms or disconfirms the accuracy and helpfulness of the paraphrase

Example A: Client - I just don't understand. One minute she tells me to do this, and the next minute to do that.

Counselor - She really confuses you.

Client - Yeah, she sure does, and besides ....

Example B: Teacher - What would you say is the thesis of your essay?

Student - About how most people are afraid of hospitals because they're afraid of what doctors might do to hurt them.

Teacher - So, fear of hospitals is caused by fear of pain.

Student - That's a big part, but also there's ....

2. Perception Checking

Purposes: (1) to guess a basic message and ask for verification of it
(2) to bring vague thoughts into sharper focus
(3) to correct misconceptions of the student's message

Guidelines: (1) Admit confusion about student's meaning
(2) Paraphrase what you think you heard
(3) Ask for confirmation directly from the student
(4) Allow student to correct your perception if it was inaccurate

Example: Teacher - Let me try to understand. Now you say there is a second reason for the fear of hospitals - anxiety or fear of the unknown. Is that part of it too?

3. Leading

Purpose: to invite verbal expression and exploration along desired lines

A. Indirect leading

Purposes: (1) to get student started
(2) to keep responsibility on him for keeping the conference going

Guidelines: (1) Determine the purpose of the lead clearly
(2) Keep the lead general and deliberately vague
(3) Pause long enough for the student to pick up the lead

Examples: "Perhaps we could start by you telling me how this assignment went for you."

"Tell me more about that."

B. Direct leading

Purposes: (1) to focus talk on a specific concern
(2) to take student deeper into his own thinking

Guidelines: (1) Determine the purpose of the lead
(2) Express the purpose in words which elicit specific elaboration
(3) Allow the student the freedom to follow the lead

Examples: "Tell me some more causes for the fear of hospitals."

"Give me a specific example of what causes that fear."

4. Interpreting

Purposes: (1) to explain the meaning of a student's thoughts or writing
(2) to help students to see their thought or writing in a new way
(3) to teach students to interpret their own thoughts and writing

Guidelines: (1) Look for basic message(s) of student
(2) Paraphrase it or them to him
(3) Add your understanding of what the message means or implies
(4) Keep language simple and in same tone as his message
(5) Clearly label interpretations as your own and offer them tentatively
(6) Ask for the student's reaction to your interpretation

Example: "So, your point is that with abortion a woman's right to her own body isn't the issue. Let me add this comparison: When she's having an abortion, a woman isn't exercising the same right to her own body as when she chooses to have her tonsils or appendix removed. Does that get close to what you were saying?

5. Summarizing

Purposes: (1) to tie together into one statement several ideas or concerns at the end of a discussion unit or the end of a conference
(2) to provide a sense of movement and an awareness of progress in a conference or series of conferences
(3) to check the student's understanding of the outcome of the discussion

Guidelines: (1) Decide if it would be more helpful for you or the student to summarize
(2) Put together the results of the conference into broad statements

Examples: "So far we've talked about developing your thesis with more examples. Now let's give some attention to the order of those paragraphs."

"How does our work look to you at this point? Try to pull it together briefly."

"Summarize briefly what you'll be doing to this paper in the next draft."

"In our last conference we talked about making the paragraphs fuller and more focused on a single point. Let's see how those paragraphs came out and talk about how to connect these sentences."