Humanizing Your Online Course:
Helping Your Students Develop a Growth Mindset

"Your feedback is critical to your students' continuous growth. But how you deliver your feedback really makes a difference, especially in an online course."
(**Pacansky-Brock***)*

In this fourth (and final issue) of our summer newsletter series, we continue to explore practical tips to create a welcoming and inclusive learning environment in your online course. When you *humanize* your online course, you build your teaching intentionally on framework of the four interwoven humanizing principles of *trust*, *presence*, *awareness*, and *empathy*.

Here we focus on two more practices for humanizing your online course (from Pacansky-Brock's list of eight humanizing elements): (**1) "Warm & Wise" Feedback;** and (2) **"Wisdom Wall".**

- Through "Warm & Wise" Feedback, you promote a growth mindset, sending the humanizing message to each student, *"I believe you can do this and I'm here to help."*

- Through the "Wisdom Wall" activity, students share reflections on their learning and provide advice for future students. The "Wisdom Wall" promotes community and serves as wrap-up activity at the end of the course. This activity sends the humanizing message to your students, *"Learning is a process of growth."*

HUMANIZING YOUR ONLINE COURSE
HELPING YOUR STUDENTS DEVELOP A GROWTH MINDSET

"WARM & WISE" FEEDBACK

- *What is it?* You share personalized feedback that promotes a growth mindset, following framework: **High Standards + Effort + Ability + Specific Action**.

- *How?* Use audio or video feedback to provide clear, personalized feedback.

- *Why?* Through warm & wise feedback, you send the humanizing message to each student, *"I believe you can do this and I'm here to help."*

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"WISDOM WALL"

- *What is it?* Students share reflections on their learning and provide advice for future students. This is a great wrap-up activity to use at end of a course.

- *How?* Use tools such as Padlet, Google Jamboard, Harmonize, or Whiteboard to create a wall of postings made by the class.

- *Why?* This activity sends the humanizing message to your students, *"Learning is a process of growth."*

View the "Humanizing Your Online Course: Helping Your Students Develop a Growth Mindset" Infographic Online

Tips for Growth Mindset in Your "Humanized" Online Course

Here we share two practical ways to help your students develop a growth mindset in your online course: (1) "Warm and Wise" Feedback; and (2) "Wisdom Wall". Note that the practical tips and best research-based practices shared here are suggested "starting points" for humanizing your online course. We encourage you to try, adapt, and apply these tips and practices to your own online courses and online teaching, finding out what works best for you and your students.

1. Provide "Warm and Wise" Feedback

What is "Warm and Wise" Feedback and Why is it Important to Humanizing Courses?

Through your feedback to students, you can help them move from a *fixed* mindset to a *growth* mindset. When students have a fixed mindset, they feel that they just aren't good at something (such as writing, math, science, language), and that they will never be able to take action to improve. Through a growth mindset, students gain confidence for learning with continuous growth over time from action, effort, perseverance. and drive. *"Warm and Wise" Feedback* is how you need to frame and deliver your feedback to students, in order to promote and support a growth mindset.

How to Prepare & Deliver "Humanized" Feedback to Your Online Students?

Content: The content of your "Humanized" & "Warm and Wise" Feedback should support: **High Standards; Effort; Ability; and Specific Action.** Pacansky-Brock's humanized framework is based on the work of Cohen & Steele (2002) and Dweck (2006). See Infographic "Warm & Wise" Feedback Infographic below and **online.**

based on Pacansky-Brock (2020)

"WARM & WISE" FEEDBACK
"I BELIEVE IN YOU."

HIGH STANDARDS
- Remind student of high standards ("*this is a tough problem*") so students is cued that mistakes are reflective of the course's rigor, as opposed to their abilities.

EFFORT
- Assure student they are capable and will improve with effort ("Look how much you've improved already, keep going. You've got this.")..

ABILITY
- Let student know that you believe in them and direct them to resources and to specific actions.

SPECIFIC ACTION
- Provide specific actionable steps for student to work on ("Next, I want you to work on …").

HUMANIZING FEEDBACK IN YOUR ONLINE COURSE TO PROMOTE A GROWTH MINDSET

Tips for Growth Mindset in Your "Humanized" Online Course (continued)

Use Audio or Video: To deliver feedback to your students, consider using audio or video for a more "humanized" approach to create & communicate engaging, personalized feedback. As shared by Mason faculty member Dr. Jered Borup (CEHD) in **this 2020 blog post,** video messaging and feedback from instructors can help reduce isolation of online learners, particularly during times of social distancing.

See additional guidelines shared by **West _et al._ (2017)** for using videos for feedback and communication in asynchronous online & blended courses. Guidelines include: Writing out ideas first; providing summary notes to students; avoiding re-recording videos, keeping it short; and "embracing imperfection". These tips follow the humanizing element of creating brief," imperfect" videos, which we covered in **our Summer 2022 Newsletter Issue 3.**

REVIEW AND REFLECT: How Do YOU Provide Feedback to Your Online Students?

Overall, "humanized" feedback is "warm & wise" and includes a "coaching" framework of encouragement with guidance to specific action & improvement. Another way to prepare and deliver such "humanized" feedback is found in **ROCK-SOLID Coaching Method (RSCM)** (Leisure, 2021).

Please review & reflect on these questions about your feedback.

- How is your feedback clear & descriptive?
- How is your feedback constructive, providing mix of positive and critical comments?
- How is your feedback actionable, providing students with guidance for now and in the future?
- How is your feedback timely and prompt?
- How is your feedback prioritized and balanced?
- How is your feedback personalized to each student?

How Do You Provide Feedback In Your Online Course?

How is your feedback clear and descriptive?

How is your feedback constructive, providing mix of positive and critical comments?

How is your feedback actionable, providing students with guidance for now and in the future?

How is your feedback timely and prompt?

How is your feedback prioritized and balanced ?

How is your feedback personalized to each student?

Feedback should inform students about what they do or do not understand, identify where their performance is strong or weak, and show them how to direct their future efforts.

From: https://universityservices.wiley.com/quality-feedback-in-virtual-learning/

(2) Use "Wisdom Wall" Class Activity

What is a "Wisdom Wall" and Why & When to Use this Activity?

A "Wisdom Wall" is a class activity in which all students share their experiences about their learning, particularly to provide guidance for students taking this online course in the future. This activity also is known as "Pass the Torch", and is best used as a closing activity at the end of course. **Pacansky-Brock's "Wisdom Wall"** leverages the online environment by using tools to create a "virtual wall" of students' reflections for the entire class to view. The "Wisdom Wall" sends the humanizing message to students, *"Learning is a process of growth."*

As instructor, you can use the information shared in the "Wisdom Wall" to identify possible improvements to your online course. You also may share the wall (or excerpts, as anonymous feedback) with your next class when you teach this online course again, letting them know that this is advice from past students. Make sure that you get students' permission to share their Wisdom Wall submissions, particularly if you are using tools like VoiceThread or Harmonize.

The "Wisdom Wall" is a great activity to close the online course, having students reflect and share on their learning experiences. Other End-of-Course Activities are described in **the November 2021 issue** of Stearns Center Online Teaching Coaching Newsletter.

How to Create a "Wisdom Wall"?

This is an example of a Google Jamboard Wall.

You can use tools such as **Padlet**, **VoiceThread**, **Harmonize**, **Google Jamboard** for students to create a Wisdom Wall Reflection in your online course. If you are teaching synchronously online, you can even use the **Whiteboard** in Zoom and in Collaborate Ultra!

Here are examples of Wisdom Wall Class Reflections, created with different online tools:

- Wisdom Wall created with VoiceThread from Pacansky-Brock's 2020 Photography online course. Note that student permission was obtained prior to sharing these comments. *VoiceThread tool is available to GMU faculty. Please contact Stearns Center for access information.*

- Wisdom Wall created in Padlet. Although this wall was created for a high school class, you can see how this tool may be used to create a Wisdom Wall. *Padlet tool is available to GMU faculty. Please contact Stearns Center for access information.*

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Humanizing Your Online Course: Next Steps!

In this newsletter issue, you've learned how to help your students move from a fixed mindset, to develop a growth mindset. Through "humanized" feedback, you send the message that *"I believe that you can do this, and I am here to help you learn"*. Through the "Wisdom Wall" or other end-of-course class reflection activity, your students realize that *"learning is a process of growth"*.

As you provide feedback to students during your online course, always keep in mind the four interwoven humanizing principles of *trust, presence, awareness,* and *empathy!*

Need Additional Guidance? Please contact Dr. Darlene Smucny, Assistant Director, Digital Learning, Stearns Center, for guidance and assistance for humanizing your online course. Her email is: **dsmucny@gmu.edu.**

Resources

About Wise Feedback Model

- Cohen, G. L., & Steele, C. M. (2002). A barrier of mistrust: How stereotypes affect cross-race mentoring. In J. Aronson (Ed.), *Improving academic achievement: Impact of psychological factors on education* (pp. 205-331). Academic Press. *<Book is available from Mason Fenwick Library Stacks>*

About Growth Mindset

- Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House.

About Comparing Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset Feedback

- Vincent-Layton, K., Pacansky-Brock, M. and Smedshammer, M. (n.d.) **Handout: Warm, Wise Feedback that supports High Standards + Effort + Ability + Specific Action.** Open Resource created with funds from the California Education Learning Lab and shared with a CC-BY-NC license.

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