Article: “Why I Teach”

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Why Teach?
• Disincentives
• Incentives – motivations, reasons, introspection into the personal forces

On Remembering and Being Remembered
• Linking recent insights (see paragraph about Irv Yalom’s Staring at the Sun) to formative experiences.
• Inventory of key moments with a patient, with a mentee.
• Immortality strategy.
• Neural network theory: set of repeated interactions with important figures in one’s life are ‘wired’ into our cortex. Thoughts \(\rightarrow\) feelings \(\rightarrow\) behaviors \(\rightarrow\) identity?

On Mentoring
• Author likens experience of mentoring to experience of providing patient care.
• Profound connection with others under emotionally powerful situations.
• Aging well; concrete pleasure in sharing triumph of those we have mentored.
• Believing in someone, challenging their abilities, elevating their skill level, seeing the physician they will become
• “Hidden curriculum.”
Altruism and Self Interest

- Teaching as a means of self-fulfillment.
- Mirror neurons – immediate/direct understanding of other humans.
- Aging well; Vaillant study of men; altruism ↑ significantly in second half of life.
- Moll et al NIH study, re: are reward systems activated by altruistic activity?

Teaching as learning

- Teach to learn, treating patients to learn
- Immersion of mind into an experience, not just the cerebral notion of it.
- Teach to clarify one’s thoughts, transmit a point of view on relevant issues

Preserving a Dying Art

- Psychotherapy as an essential skill versus ‘med checks’
- Neurobiological reductionism
- Danger of losing curiosity about what is happening inside the patient
- ‘Healthy’ doctor and ‘sick’ patient, or two “patients” in the room?
- Teaching as a transcendent experience – teaching to learn, teaching to enrich our own lives, teaching to be transformed by the world around us.

Considerations

- What motivates you to teach?
- Can one be transformed by the act of teaching? In what ways?
- What goes into building a professional legacy?