



Dealing with Challenging Students

Helena Wildblood
FYNAC July 2008

in what way are they challenging?

- tangible?
- obvious?
- deliberate?

- probably not – harder to deal with!

attendance – attitude - behaviour

challenging attendance

see Nikki Hughes' presentation from last year

- lack regular attendance
- present but not engaging
- withdrawing
- illness

challenging attitude

- push me to the limit
- everything at the last minute
- chip on shoulder
- disruptive
- cultural differences eg
 - silence
 - not questioning

challenging behaviour

minor -> severe

- disruptive – arriving late, noisily
- undermining comments
- challenging “knowledge” of tutor
- questioning - why are we doing this?
- physical threats (rare?)

WHO are they challenging?

am I the problem?

- dislike of tutor (we don't all like everyone)
- male / female issues?
- subject related

- how does this student relate to others?

whose problem is it?

- if it affects others in the group
- if it affects me so I cannot operate properly
- if it takes too much of my time

I need to feel good too!

WHY are they challenging?

quiet personality

- shy
- lacking confidence
- fear of failure
- hate / react badly to new situations
- new ways of doing things
- away from home

WHY are they challenging?

- learning disorder / disability
- may be undiagnosed

are we trained to recognise
let alone deal with this?

WHY are they challenging?

dealing with stress / emotion

- relationship problems
- bereavement
- family breakup
- money problems
- illness

harder to deal with?

WHY are they challenging?

aggressive personality

- game playing, trying to upset me
- pushing limits without crossing line
 - late work, turn up at last minute
- naturally confrontational
- (rare) deep seated personality problems

do they realise they are?

how to deal with this?

I need more training / help / support / time...

intervention

I am an academic

I am not a

- psychologist
- financial advisor
- relationship counsellor
- samaritan
- support worker

or am I?

I only want to do my best
for all of my students

turn the –ive to the +ive

Intervention can be helpful (Nikki's work)

but it takes a lot of time so

SHARE THE LOAD

don't take things personally

acknowledge feelings (yours and students)

stay in your depth

how to deal with this

- make relationship with student
- identify issues
- be a gatekeeper – pass to someone else?
- search for possible solutions
- learning contracts
- rules and sanctions as last resort

but look after yourself

- share
- debrief
- reduce stress by doing something +ive
- be aware of need for boundaries
and keep them

the more you care, the harder it gets