Principle 1
Creating an engaging, motivating and intellectually stimulating learning experience.

Case Study 2

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Given the potentially vulnerable nature of the first-year student group especially in a large class context, influencing, motivating and inspiring students to learn (and to continue at university) is a vital component of my teaching, and by doing so, I can help to redress the negative emotional experiences common in this context. I have approached this aspect of my teaching through (1) creating a safe and motivating environment in which students can engage with each other, the course and the learning process, and by (2) giving compassion and support for students as individuals. My philosophy of *making it personal* and *making it active* underpins both of these approaches.

Creating a safe and motivating environment
My *personal* approach to students is a major component in the creation of a safe and motivating environment, and I have found that it is often the 'little things' that have a big impact - for example, the use of student names. From the first lecture, I aim to get to know students personally, even in a group of 300. I don't remain behind the lectern but move around the lecture theatre talking directly with students. Whenever a student asks a question, makes a statement or responds to me in class, I approach the student personally and if I don't know their name I ask for it and then use it during my interaction with them. So, while I may never learn *all* names, students feel that I want to know them personally and value their individual contributions. This impacts on the environment in two important ways: it helps to demonstrate my respect and care for students and creates a sense that each person is important and valued as an individual; and it generates a sense of community or of being in a 'collective of fellow learners'. Both aspects are vital in addressing the potential for isolation and anonymity often experienced in large classes.

I also support the creation of a learning community by an initial "getting to know you" *activity* in the first lecture. One such activity is a version of "person bingo" where instead of numbers, students are required to find a person who 'fits' each of the squares (e.g., someone who "can name a famous psychologist" or "wears the same shoe size as you") and the first to fill the matrix and call out "bingo!" wins. Students mingle amongst the group, and I also become involved in this activity, talking with students and giving them opportunities to find a match with me. It is a short 5 minute activity that energises students, allows them to have some fun (which is amazing to watch with 300 students!), and as students don't expect to engage in activities in a large lecture class, this is often a surprising experience. But more importantly, it begins to establish a safe and engaging learning environment: 'safe' in that it builds familiarity amongst students and I demonstrate my willingness to interact with students as individuals; and 'engaging' in that it demonstrates to students that learning at university can be fun and enjoyable, and I am motivated and happy to be an integrated part of their teaching and learning experience.

In addition to building the underpinning social substrate required for students to feel safe, both socially and intellectually, I also ensure that content and activities which have *personal* relevance for students are integrated throughout the course. This helps to facilitate intellectual engagement in the course content and discipline of psychology, and also to acknowledge and cater for the diversity of student backgrounds and career goals. To do this, I particularly focus on embedding personal, interesting, or real-life examples of concepts in lectures, and *active* learning exercises in lectures and tutorials. These strategies provide an experience of relevance either vicariously through examples, or directly through students' own learning experiences.

For instance, in each lecture I include at least one learning activity that facilitates students' exploration and understanding of a key concept. This might take the form of a group brainstorming exercise, role-play, small group discussion, or a mini-experiment in which students complete a simplified version of an experimental task and I then facilitate reflection, helping students to formulate their own hypotheses about what they experienced and relate this to the relevant theory or content.