SWEET Advice for Student Success

We spend a lot of time thinking about strategies for teaching and learning that can improve student learning. Sometimes, we need to step back and think about the state of the learner. How well can a student make use of the learning activities we design?

Bowen (2012, 2017a & b) suggests we not only remind students, but encourage them to attend to non-cognitive factors that can improve (or interfere with) their ability to learn. Bowen identifies five non-cognitive factors and describes these in a neat mnemonic that makes them easy for students and faculty to recall: SWEET.

- **Sleep.** Modern life (and the allure of screens) promotes sleep deprivation. Small daily doses of sleep deprivation accumulate over time and impair short term memory and attention. Two weeks of chronic sleep deprivation can create cognitive impairments similar to impairments observed in people who have been awake for 48 hours. Moreover, sleep is important for consolidating memories and new skills.

- **Water.** Our brains function better when our body is properly hydrated. Students sometimes try to offset sleep deprivation by consuming caffeinated beverages, which also function as diuretics. They might feel more awake, but they will function better if they ensure that they are properly hydrated.

- **Eat.** Just as hydration is important for brain function, so is nutrition. Thinking (and learning) requires energy and effort. Reduced glucose levels in the brain have been associated with more impulsive behavior and impaired decision-making (Masicampo & Baumeister, 2008).

- **Exercise.** Bowen argues that physical activity can improve cognitive function. A growing body of research illustrates how simple activities like taking a walk can help individuals solve problems and develop new, creative ideas.

- **Time.** Learning requires practice, and practice requires spending time on assigned practice tasks. In addition, many effective learning strategies (the testing effect, spaced repetition) entail multiple episodes of practice distributed over time.

UPCOMING EVENTS

**OCTOBER 2019**

- **Social Event**, October 4, 3:30-5:30 pm at Not Your Average Joe’s
- **Article Club**, October 16, KN 5579 and October 17, FL 2135
- **Coffee Hour**, October 23, 12-1 pm, KN 1130, FL 1304, PV 1134, NE 233
- **Idea Exchange:** Developing effective and engaging classes, November 5, FL 1304 and November 6, KN 4090

Visit [ccri.edu/tlc](http://ccri.edu/tlc) for more information.
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RESOURCES
Bowen, J. A. (2017a, June). Assessment as strategy: You are what you measure. Plenary address at the annual meeting of the Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education (AALHE), Louisville, KY.


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“One of the beauties of teaching is that there is no limit to one’s growth as a teacher, just as there is not knowing beforehand how much your students can learn”
—HERBERT KOHL