Student-Centered Advising Techniques: Theory to Practice

**Congruence**

This is when the advisor tries to point out how both the advisor and the student have been similarly affected by such issues at some time. Advisor and student must find common ground regarding an issue or problem so they will be more likely to find, or agree upon, a common solution. Here the advisor can present an anecdote about themselves as a student where they struggled or any other stressful experience that relates to the current student’s perspective. This is something that any advisor can do with practice as long as you choose a genuine experience that you are comfortable sharing in a professional setting.

**Unconditional Positive Regard**

This should occur throughout the advising session and be apparent in your basic manner and behavior around the student. You want to project the assumption that you authentically accept the student for who he or she is without judgment of their character, actions or what they say. You can do this both with body language and in the manner you speak to the student:

- **Body Language**
  
  Be open and welcoming to student: face them as much as possible with as much eye-contact as possible. Keep your posture relaxed and open: show you are attentive but not domineering, relaxed but not remote. Sitting straight towards the student with your hands clasped in front of you ready to express your point of view is good rather than leaning in or away from the student! Use appropriate facial expressions and affirmative head nods. Avoid nervous or bored gestures and fight off external distractions. If you do have to spend time with a document or your computer, acknowledge that with the student verbally so they don’t feel like you’ve stopped focusing on them!

- **Speaking Style**
  
  Your speaking style needs to build good will and credibility with the student whilst projecting an honest and heartfelt sincerity. Be prepared to sympathize verbally with the student and affirm every struggle they disclose. Be reassuring and encouraging while you question. Try to stick to questions first while you formulate your advice that is reflective of what they have expressed so your advice will be authentic. Try and keep it conversational and natural and this will make the student less defensive. You need to affirm to the student that you accept him/her despite their failings or their own perceived flaws.

**Accurate Emphatic Understanding**

When you use the Rogerian technique, you rephrase the words of the student and repeat them back to him or her. This invites the student to elaborate on her/his concerns. It succeeds only when the advisor understands the student from their perspective. The advisor must present the student’s apparent perspective clearly, accurately, and fairly back to the student before asking them to consider an alternative path of progress.
• **Active Listening**

Let your advisees tell their story first; do not interrupt their sentences. Relax and try not to give advisees the impression you want to jump right in and talk. Appreciate the emotion, e.g. voice intonation and body language, behind your advisees' words. Constantly check your understanding of what you hear, not what you want to hear. Intermittently respond to your advisees with “uh-huh,” “yes-s-s,” “I see.” Ask clarifying or continuing questions to demonstrate to your advisees that you are involved in what they're saying. Constantly check to see if your advisees want to comment or respond to what you have previously said to them. Take notes, if necessary, where certain facts and data are important but try to limit the amount you are writing until after the appointment.