



The Caltech Y RISE PROGRAM

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Motivating Students

Tutor-Led Workshop with Rise Program Tutors, Mike Anaya (Caltech Graduate Student) & Kevin Kyu Kim (Caltech Undergraduate Student)

Mike Anaya, Rise Program Tutor

- Carl Sagan – What made him such an effective communicator of science was that he wasn't brilliant. He went through the process of figuring things out – the mechanics, which enabled him to communicate ideas. I put myself in the student's position and try to remember what was helpful for me in learning this.
- 3 Suggestions for Motivating Students
 1. Starts with the Tutor
 2. Be Positive
 3. Attentiveness

Starts with the Tutor

- The tutor has to be engaged and ready to tutor.
- Our motivation to tutor is to give back and share our knowledge with others.
- Remember we are there for them and it's in our best interest to be motivated.
- Students look up to us. Even if it doesn't show outwardly. If you are uninterested, unmotivated, it's not going to go well. They will mirror you.
- Try to bring energy and passion. That is contagious.

Be Positive

- Some students are easy to tutor and it's a breeze. Other students are not excited and it's obvious they don't want to be there. They may even view you with hostility. Be positive. Show them you are here to help and to work as a team.
- Find ways to connect. (E.g. my current student is fairly difficult and doesn't care about school. At the break he busted out the magic cards. I showed interest and the session turned around).
- Build mutual respect. I respected him and he respected me.
- Find shared interests
- Stay positive. We don't know the outside situation and we can't fix all their problems, but we can make tutoring a pleasant experience.

Attentiveness

- Give your full focus
- If you are there, but only half there and looking around, the student will also start looking around and lose interest. Student takes cues from you.

My success as a tutor is that I see them as a person, build a personal connection, and stay positive and attentive.



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Kevin Kyu Kim, Rise Program Tutor

- Find shared interests. This keeps them motivated (e.g. sports and stats. Students play fantasy, I play fantasy).
- If you care and get them to care about you, you can get them interested
- Use current events (e.g. Tutee was a Broncos fan. Pate Manning was up to break a record. Gave the student a problem to try and figure out how many yards Manning had to throw at each game to break that record. # of yards was the y-intercept).
- Students are at school for 8 hours and then come to tutoring. They might lose steam 20 minutes in. Throw in breaks and set small goals (e.g. if the homework is to do problems 1-15 odd, challenge them to do problems 1-13 before the break and then they can use their cell phone).
- Set short-term realistic goals. Want them to work fast, but not so fast that make mistakes. This motivates them. Getting an A at the end of the semester may be too long term. Set shorter goals.
- Gain their respect. Show that you know something about a subject they care about (e.g. cars).
- Use the break to become friends, but use the work time to work

Questions & Discussion

How to get a student to open up?

- Important to find common ground to connect
- Ask lots of questions (e.g. What do you care about? What do you like to do when you go home?)
- Apply food or money to problems if I can't get them to open up about their interests. Everyone likes food and money. (e.g. use money to help students understand fractions)
- I start talking. Share my interests.
- I like it when my tutee sees me do something wrong or if there is an answer I don't know. I show them how to find the answer and that I'm not some perfect being that knows it all. Then I give them the exact same problem and let them solve it. Their confidence goes up and you can see the pride on their face. Always trying to cultivate that pride. I use the method: **Learn one. Do one. Teach One.**

Sleepy Student

- Ask lots of questions. Require participation
- Be loud
- Being really honest with the student (e.g. I think you're getting off track)
- Ask what would help you stay awake?

Student is Motivated at the session, but don't look at the material outside of tutoring

- Ask why didn't you do this?
- Be clear on expectations



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- I assign just one problem and say, "Tell me how you would do this when you come back next time." That way they don't even have to do the problem. They just have to think about it.
- Have them watch one episode of Khan Academy
- Patience is key
- Basic study skills are learned behaviors. May need to teach them how to study outside of tutoring.
- Try offering incentives

Teachers that don't give work

- Let the student know that I want them to understand this
- Set goals
- Go online, find problems, use a textbook at Rise
- Know their goals and tie it to why they need to know this subject.

Learning Styles

- People respond to different styles of learning. Find what they respond to. Some are good listeners, so I talk through explanations. Most are visual that's when I draw figures.
- Sometimes 2-D isn't enough and 3-D is needed. I'll cut out pyramid with paper
- Look up the concept on a laptop or phone
- Sometimes I'll explain something over and over, but it doesn't click with the student. I might have only one way of thinking about this problem and can't understand why they don't get it. In this case I shallow my pride and say let's watch a video or ask another tutor to explain. Recently I asked my roommate to explain a concept to my student. I didn't get my roommate's explanation, but the student did.