Using Online Learning Journals for Students with Disabilities in a University Setting

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OVERVIEW

- Compensatory strategies are designed to help skills and tactics but do not address negative self-concepts that may be inaccurate and remain hidden.
- Opportunities for growth and self-exploration are not available; the student’s narrative does not become manifest.
- Learning Journals are metacognitive activities that promote increased awareness and the management of cognitive processes.
- The externalization of thinking plus contiguous feedback provides a safe avenue to express personal constructs.
- It is through this externalization that self-awareness is heightened and leads to shifts in personal values.

LEARNING JOURNALS

- Document cognitive and affective strategies;
- Help students develop ownership;
- Provide a record of change;
- They can be subtle.
- Afford an opportunity for contiguous reinforcement;
- Offer positive reinforcement;
- Provide a medium to shape metacognitive skills.

THE LEARNING JOURNAL AS AGENT OF CHANGE

J: “A big part in learning to work with a learning disorder is establishing exactly where your strengths and limits are.”

B: (LJ1) “This course was recommended because of my learning disability.”

K: “Looking back at my Self and Task Analyses provokes my thinking towards my life in general. Through UCC and the Journal alone I have learned my strengths and weaknesses as a student such as having great deep processing and poor fact retention.”

L: “At the beginning of the year, I would blame all of these distractions on my ADD; however, I have learned that I can control getting distracted much more than I thought. I now know that my way of studying Science was not effective.”

M: “Overall, I feel I have made a lot of improvements, mainly with the things I’ve learned in this course for my learning disability. Recently, I have been studying for an upcoming midterm in Biochemistry, Metabolism. I have been trying to memorize the enzymes and the citric acid cycle, the second part of the Krebs Cycle (see example for process).”

B: (LJ10) “This reflection is a very good idea.”

B: (LJ2) “After looking back at the fall semester, I can tell exactly where I went wrong. I have finally realized my studying mistakes and I am changing them now. Every time I read Biology I am trying to put what I am reading to work or trying to make ‘cute’ ways to remember things. For example, I need to know the four types of nucleotides that make up DNA: Adenine, Guanine, Cytosine, and Thymine. So I group C, A, T together to make the word, ‘CAT’ and then ‘G’ by itself. I recall these by saying “my CAT George is AT the Keg.” I can remember all the names because Greg is my grandfather’s name and the Keg is my favourite restaurant.”

B: (LJ22) “I know what type of learner I am, how my memory encodes information and the best way for me to recall information. I feel like this course has been life changing, not just academically, but overall.”