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# Tutoring the Whole Person: Supporting Emotional Development in Writers and Tutors

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Abstract

This article explores and challenges the traditional position that writing centers have had with working with emotions in writing center contexts. After reviewing challenges to mental health on college campuses, we demonstrate through previous research the important role emotions and emotional regulation has in writerly development. Drawing upon this work, we offer key suggestions for writing centers to "tutor the whole person" including training tutors in emotional intelligence, tutoring using metacognitive strategies, and tutoring using mindfulness practice. The article concludes by considering the role of self-care and emotional labor in writing center work, offering strategies and suggestions.

The fact that college students are grappling with emotions that can impede their academic success is not news to anyone teaching in the university today. Yet, at the time when we were making final revisions of this article, the COVID-19 pandemic struck the United States, illustrating even more critically the intersection of well-being and educational achievement. The COVID-19 pandemic has stretched the limits of students' emotional resilience—not to mention those of faculty, staff, and student tutors—and has surfaced the urgency of attending to emotions in our courses, workplaces, and writing centers.

In 2017, the American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment surveyed 40,000 students in a nationwide study. Results indicate that 52.6% of students experienced anxiety; students felt their anxiety had impacted their learning and performance, with 26.4% of reporting that it caused lower grades, required them to drop courses, or to take incompletes (46)[1]. Further, research suggests that students are seeking more emotional support services on their college campuses than in the past. The Center for Collegiate Mental Health's Annual Report describes the increase in students' use of counseling services around the US as rising between 20-30% in a five-year period and reports that anxiety and depression were the top reasons for seeking emotional support or mental health services. This reporting all predates colleges moving completely online, residential students being abruptly moved off campus, hundreds of thousands of students losing jobs, and the networks that many students rely on for support being upended.

While peer reviewed published research is not yet available due to the ongoing nature of the COVID-19 crisis, in an IWCA-sponsored webinar hosted by Dana on self-care in writing centers, over thirty directors and tutors shared their experiences relating to the challenges faced as part of the pandemic: lack of focus, increased anxiety, decreased productivity, and increased emotional labor demands (Driscoll, 2020). After making the transition to fully online tutoring at both Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) and New College of Florida, tutors in both writing centers expressed concern about a growing number of student writers suffering from high levels of anxiety and lack of focus. At the same time, tutors at New College noted that students reported seeking online writing appointments because they provided social and emotional support as much as academic support. It is possible, and perhaps likely, that students have been seeking writing center support all along because it is a place where both types of needs can be met.

Emotional development is never separate from intellectual and academic development, yet it is still the case that, in "business as usual" times, most college campuses treat these facets of their students' development separately. Counseling and wellness centers are for emotional support, and the classroom and other academic centers, including writing centers, are for intellectual growth. Yet, as Daniel Eisenberg, et al. argue, this bifurcation is a missed opportunity,

> College represents the only time in many people's lives when a single integrated setting encompasses their main activities—both career-related and social—as well as health services and other support services. Campuses, by their scholarly nature, are also well positioned to develop, evaluate, and disseminate best practices. In short, colleges offer a unique opportunity to address one of the most significant public health problems among late adolescents and young adults. (3)

Eisenberg, et al. further argue that "gatekeeper programs" where students interact with trained peers or other non-mental health professionals are key in reaching populations who might not seek out professional services. Complicating this picture is that not all campuses have well-funded counseling services and faculty may not have any training and professional for supporting students' emotional distress.

In our writing centers, sessions that impact or are impacted by strong emotions occur every day. Every

tutor can tell stories about one of *those* sessions: the distraught student who is upset because of her professor's comments and how she been given a C and had never gotten one before. The extremely frustrated student who has worked himself into writer's block and it takes most of the forty-five-minute tutorial to break through his frustration. The confused student who has no idea what to do and spends the first part of the session overwhelmed with his head in his hands saying "I don't know. I just don't know." These are common, everyday experiences for writing tutors not only because college can be emotionally taxing, but also because writing centers may be perceived as places students can go to feel better as often as they are perceived as places to get help with writing. Two recent studies at New College of Florida found that writing center visits reduced student anxiety. This is how the magic of the writing center happens: the upset student calmed and on track, the frustrated student moving forward, the overwhelmed student leaving with an outline and a smile. While these kinds of sessions frequently end with more relieved, focused, and grounded writers, the work of handling a session like this can take a serious emotional toll on tutors. At the end of this kind of session, or several of these sessions, or a whole day of these sessions, tutors may feel emotionally drained. One embedded tutor working in Dana's writing center described this emotional labor this way: "as though all of the negative emotion of my basic writers transferred to me."

While we are not arguing that writing centers should be places to offer professional counseling, we do argue that writing centers are uniquely positioned to help promote a holistic approach to education by focusing on tutoring the whole person. That is, tutors can support the positive emotional and intellectual development of their student visitors. While this approach is needed in "business as usual" times, it is particularly urgent in times of crisis, either local or global.

Therefore, this article engages with ways that we can promote emotional resilience and writerly growth in writing center settings. In order to accomplish this goal, we explore writing centers' troubled relationship with emotions and set the stage for a shift from avoidance to recognition that emotions are inherently part of writing center tutoring. Using a broad body of writing development research, we argue against the idea that helping students manage writing-related emotions is somehow secondary or less important than the other aspects of tutoring writing. Finally, we explore and address the emotional labor involved in working with tutees' emotions and ways tutors might effectively manage emotional sessions—and their own self-care—by drawing upon the professional literature from other "caring" professions like nursing, social work, psychology, and education.

## The Challenge with Emotions in the Writing Center

A review of tutor training manuals suggests writing center tutors should not address emotions in tutorials but should dismiss emotions as quickly as possible to get to the "real work" of the session. Noreen Lape and Daniel Lawson have both explored writing center training materials' relationship with emotions through analysis of books and articles in the field. Lape analyzes popular tutor training manuals and finds that manuals often present emotions in negative terms and finds that emotionally charged sessions as "threatening to sabotage both the tutor's and the writer's efforts" (2). Lape reports that manuals offer tutors suggestions and strategies for dealing with such emotions but from the perspective of getting writers' emotions out of the way as soon as possible to get to the real work of the session—the writing.

Lawson, following up in 2015, sought to extend Lape's work and perform a systematic content analysis on articles from the *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship* (1976-2015) and the *Writing Center Journal* (1981-2015) to understand how scholarly discussions in writing centers have handled explicit discussion of emotions and other affective dimensions of tutorials. Lawson found three articles in *WCJ* and 20 articles and 4 tutor's columns in *WLN*. Similar to Lape's findings, Lawson found that scholarly discussions of writing centers focus almost entirely on "disruptive" emotions and their associated behaviors (20) and use problematic metaphors to describe students' emotions (24). Positive emotions, as Lawson notes, are rarely discussed in a writing center setting. Second, emotion was viewed by the scholarship as "disruptive" to tutorials; he notes that "emotion disrupts the ostensibly intellectual work of the session" (23). Third, he notes that the literature sees "reason and emotion are mutually exclusive states" that are externally held by the tutee and the tutee should be able to "shift" between them (24). Finally, he notes that emotions are framed as something we possess or carry, like baggage (24).

Given that manuals and scholarly work seem to suggest dismissing or minimizing student emotions, it follows that tutors have been advised to not engage with their tutees' emotions, or, if they do, to do so only as a last resort. Writing center scholars, such as Tracy Hudson and Kristie Speirs, have argued that tutorials are not therapy sessions. Yet, many tutor training books and manuals suggest tutors wear what Ryan and

Zimmerelli call the "hats" of tutoring; tutors can wear many hats such as "writing expert" "collaborator" or "coach" but also sometimes put on the hat of "counselor." Leigh Ryan and Lisa Zimmerelli describe the counselor hat as follows: "Often, other issues and concerns interfere with completing the assignment. Sometimes you may find yourself playing the role of counselor" (31). Tutors may wear the counselor hat, but only if the emotions are "interfering" with the session. Christina Murphy and Melissa R. Weintraub both argue that tutors are sometimes put into the 'unofficial' counselor role and concede that this is necessary but not ideal. This body of work suggests a larger consensus in the writing center community about the unwanted role that emotions may play in writing center tutorials. While we believe that this consensus is starting to change, evidenced by recent themes and presentations at writing center conferences described below, we still have much work to do. One aim of this article is to help jump start that conversation.

Given this history, it is not surprising that tutors may often perceive emotions as negative in the writing center setting. In 2016, Jennifer Follett conducted a mixed methods study of how tutors at one institution engaged with negative achievement emotions in tutoring sessions. Follett collected surveys from 28 undergraduate and graduate writing center tutors, tutors' written reflections, and audio recordings of tutorial sessions. The majority of Follett's tutor participants believed that negative emotions were damaging to student writers (90), and that tutors frequently found themselves engaging with students' emotions—mostly negative—surrounding writing in tutorial sessions (91). Ninety percent of tutors reported anxiety being felt by half the students visiting the writing center (92). The "negative" emotions often expressed in tutoring sessions included anger, anxiety, hopelessness, frustration, and boredom.

The picture seems clear: writing centers are frequently a place where students manifest emotions, often negative emotions (Follett; Hudson; Speirs). Some writing center scholarship and tutoring manuals advocate responding to these emotions in dismissive ways and portray emotions as something we need to overcome to get to the real work of writing (Lape; Lawson).

Both Lape and Lawson see this negative framing of emotions in the writing center as problematic. Lape called for the WC community to revise and reframe the discourse around emotions. As Lape writes,

> If [article] writers characterize an entire range of human experience in overly simplistic metaphors, those very metaphors may limit our ability to meaningfully engage that experience: "emotional" writers will continue to be "difficult" or "disruptive."' If, on the other hand, we continue to cultivate and critically examine metaphors as shorthand to positively frame and identify the work of emotion, we may find new and exciting ways of conceiving that work. (26)

The way that we frame emotions in writing center practices and the language we use certainly influences the tutoring that we offer as well as the support and effectiveness we can provide student writers.

Emotions are at the core of writing center work, and not only because helping students manage them is a frequent part of tutoring, but also because emotions have serious implications for writerly development and transfer over time. We now turn to the literature surrounding emotions and writing development to explore how learning to manage and navigate strong emotions also can make better writers.

## Why Emotions Matter: Emotions, Learning Transfer, and Writerly Development

Emotions matter, not only to self-development, but to writing development. In the broader field of composition, and increasingly in writing center work, researchers are starting to pay attention to the myriad factors that influence writing outside of the writing process. For example, the 2018 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) program offered over twenty-five sessions or posters on affect, emotions or emotional labor and in 2016, *Composition Forum* published a special issue on emotions. Likewise, the 2017 International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) program offered 9 sessions or posters on emotions or other affective dimensions; the East Central Writing Centers Association (ECWCA) focused on emotions and emotional labor as part of the theme for the 2018 conference. From these recent events, it appears that conversations and scholarship are starting to shift to pay attention to the "whole person" as part of the writing and tutoring process.

One reason we believe that so many of these conversations are taking place now is that research is showing that writing doesn't happen without a writer. As more studies explore how students transfer learning and how they develop long-term as writers, these things become clear: writing happens in the context of lived experience, emotion, prior experience, dispositions, and many other factors (Devet; Yancey, et al.; Nowacek; Driscoll and Wells, Herrington and Curtis). Thus, developmental writing research is resoundingly demonstrating that these "person" based

aspects are deeply influential on writers' processes, written products, and long-term development. Further, as our earlier work in 2012 explored, students' dispositional qualities, including self-efficacy (belief in being able to accomplish a task), value (how much a writing task was worth to a writer), or attribution (who is responsible for success), influenced students' ability to transfer writing knowledge into new situations and grow as writers (Driscoll and Wells). This growing body of research shows that individual aspects, as much as writing knowledge and skills, are critical to learning and growth.

Researchers from cross-disciplinary fields explored the relationship between educational outcomes and emotion. Learning research, such as that from Scherer and Efklides, and Volet suggests that students' emotional connections to the material and instructor constitute a critical factor for success. Further, Pekrun shows that negative emotions are detrimental to learning outcomes. Within writing studies, Jack L. Powell and Alice G. Brand and Susan McLeod have explored how positive emotions can have a positive impact on learning to write. Previously, in 2016, Dana and her co-author, Roger Powell, explored the role of emotions in both short-term writing gains and in long-term writerly development. We now turn to this study to further explore the role of emotions in writing.

As part of a larger study, Driscoll and Powell explored how emotions impacted the short-term writing gains and long-term transfer and learning development of thirteen students over five years using interview research and writing sample analysis. They found that students' emotions functioned in three primary ways:

- **Generative:** Emotions that benefited a student's writing process and/or end product. For example, a student enjoys her writing process and professor and starts early, ending up with a well-developed paper. Most frequently occurring emotions in this category included like, confidence, and enjoyment.
- **Disruptive:** Emotions that were detrimental to a students' writing process and/or end product. An example of a disruptive emotion is when a student hates the course/teacher and delays engaging in a writing process. They arrive at the writing center two hours before the paper is due with a skeleton of a draft. The most frequently occurring emotions in this category included boredom, hatred, and fear.
- **Circumstantial:** Emotions that appeared "negative" in the short run, but could end up being beneficial for longer-term writing development. These are frequently emotions that tutors deal with in the writing center, for example, the frustrated student who can't find sources for a paper may come to the writing center, have a productive session, reduce the frustration, and end up producing a good quality paper. Their top emotions in this category included frustration, anxiety, and confusion.

As Driscoll and Powell found, certain emotions had both short-term and long-term outcomes for writers. A short-term outcome would include success of a particular writing assignment or the grade in a course. A long-term outcome included the ability to grow as a writer, develop a new writing strategy, and the ability to transfer writing knowledge to new circumstances. Some emotions in the study were always generative in the short and long term (confidence, enjoyment, fun, passion, pride), others were always disruptive in the short and long term (boredom, fear, hate, dislike), and a rather large category of emotions we often see in the writing center could were circumstantial. It is to these circumstantial emotions that we now turn.

The circumstantial emotions that Driscoll and Powell describe are the same emotions that Follett reported were a regular part of writing center tutorials: frustration, anxiety, and confusion. What Driscoll and Powell found was that even when circumstantial emotions had a short-term detrimental effect (procrastination, lack of progress, frustration), if a student was able to successfully transform circumstantial emotions and achieve success, this transformation had a considerable long-term impact on facilitating learning transfer and helped shape students as reflective and productive writers. This is critical: writing-based emotions could function generatively or disruptively; that is, these emotions can lead to both short term writing success and long-term writing development—or not. It really depended on how a student used them, experienced them, and most importantly *managed* them. This means that these so-called emotions that writing center tutorials want to move out of the way and see as disruptive are actually central to long-term learning outcomes.

In the short term, managing these very common circumstantial emotions is likely key to the success of a specific paper or project. This is where the writing center tutor can intervene, and usually it's the short-term benefit that students are concerned about when they seek writing center services. In the long-term, developmental aspects also matter and can help writing centers develop in North's terms—the "writer" not just the "writing." These long-term developmental outcomes can include everything from how students

transfer and adapt their prior writing knowledge across different courses (Yancey, et al.; Devet,; Hill; Nowacek), their growing writerly self-efficacy and confidence (Driscoll and Wells), and how they develop their expertise as writers (Beaufort).

As the above research suggests, tutoring the whole person, including emotions and intellect, is critical for two reasons. First, these findings suggest that writing processes, products, transfer, and development are all heavily shaped by the emotional state of students. But second, as we discussed in the opening, a holistic approach to supporting students' emotional development on college campuses is necessary given the current mental health climate broadly and certainly, in the event of crises like COVID-19.

## Tutoring the Whole Person: Strategies for Writing Centers

In the first part of this article, we've explored colleges' challenges with student emotion on their campus, writing centers' challenged relationship with emotions, and research that demonstrates why emotions and emotional management matters for developing writers and their writing. In the second half of this article, we explore ways that writing center practitioners can shift writing centers into a more productive relationship with student emotions and emotional health. We do this by drawing upon research in other fields and offer specific examples from our two writing centers and peer tutoring courses. We conclude by acknowledging the role that emotional labor plays in this work.

Supporting the emotional well-being of students can begin with tutor education and can be grounded in the recognition of the importance of tending to both cognitive and emotional domains in writing center tutorials. Tutor education could develop tutors' emotional intelligence as well as offer explicit tutoring strategies that teach and model for writing center clients metacognitive emotional management. Lastly, it could also include the promotion of practices such as mindfulness and self-care for both tutors and students. We now consider each of those areas in turn.

*Tutor Education: Developing Emotional Intelligence in Tutors*

The development of "emotional intelligence" is a key aspect of tutor professional development sessions to help tutors manage emotion-rich tutorials. According to Nicola S. Schutte and Natasha M. Loi, emotional intelligence is defined as "perception, understanding, and managing emotions effectively in the self and others" (134). Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence* describes five key components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (37).

Emotional intelligence is well known in the caring professions (nursing, psychology, social work, etc.) and is something that is taught explicitly through courses, training, and research. For example, in the nursing profession, Lubica Ilievová, et al. discuss how the nursing profession recognizes the dual professional competencies of emotional intelligence and cognitive competence as part of core nursing practices. They argue that a "lack of emotional intelligence competencies becomes a restriction in actual application of not only expert knowledge but also intellectual abilities" (21); in other words, effective nurses must manage both their cognitive knowledge and emotional intelligence in order to serve patients best. Within the business world, Schutte and Loi articulate the clear link between emotional intelligence and workplace "flourishing," or what they call "higher. . . mental well-being, social support, mental health, and work engagement" (137). Likewise, Daniel Goleman, et al. recognize the critical importance of emotional intelligence as necessary for business leadership. These diverse fields agree: emotional intelligence is necessary to practitioner competency and effectiveness.

If tutors can further develop their own emotional intelligence, they can not only manage emotion-rich sessions effectively but develop a key skill that will make them better tutors and that will transfer to workplaces or life settings. To directly teach emotional intelligence to tutors, writing center practitioners may start with the work of Alan Mortiboys. While Mortiboys' book is designed to cultivate emotionally intelligent teachers, there is enough similarity between tutoring and teaching practice to make use of many of the strategies for tutoring sessions. Mortiboys describes emotionally intelligent teaching as follows (emphasis ours):

> Teaching with emotional intelligence entails a shift in priorities. For example, the emotionally intelligent teacher seeks to have **confidence** not just in their content and materials but also in their **flexibility and readiness** to respond; they put energy into planning a teaching session but also into **preparing** to meet the learners; they see their self-development as emphasizing not just **subject expertise** but also the **development of their self-knowledge.** (9)

Further, he describes personal qualities of empathy, genuineness, and acceptance as core qualities of emotionally intelligent teachers (10). These same qualities are those to be fostered in tutors who are ready to help writers manage emotions surrounding writing. Adapting his approach and activities to tutor

education sessions might involve any of the following, whether in a single professional development session, a part of ongoing tutor education, or through a peer tutoring course:

- Tutors can be encouraged to create lists of the qualities of emotionally intelligent tutors and develop an "action plan" for their own tutoring (10-12)
- Tutors can identify examples of times when using emotional intelligence would be prudent (Dana has taught this in a peer tutoring development course using scenarios drawn from real tutoring situations).
- Tutors can reflect upon their existing use of emotional intelligence in tutoring sessions (Dana used this strategy to help support tutors during the COVID-19 crisis).
- Tutors can create an "action plan" for how to develop their own emotional intelligence as part of their tutor development and reflect regularly on their goals.
- Tutors can discuss of scenarios based on real tutoring challenges that tutors face and talk through (Dana has used this both in peer tutoring courses and in training for the COVID-19 crisis).

Mortiboys also offers a host of active listening strategies that are directly useful to tutoring sessions and can be practiced with role-playing prior to being added into sessions:

- Recognizing that learners have feelings
- Recognizing that it is ok for learners to express those feelings
- Being ready to accept those feelings
- Being ready to respond on a cognitive as well as an emotional level (75).

Specifically, rather than trying to get beyond the emotions that a student brings to a session, tutors can learn to recognize them, accept them, and then teach students emotional management strategies that will help them engage in a productive writing process in the short term and foster long-term growth. By being willing to engage with learners' feelings, Mortiboys stresses that learners will, "feel valued; it helps you to develop a fuller relationship with them; it aids their learning; . . . and shapes a positive environment." (76). In teaching emotional intelligence, Dana has found it most productive to talk with tutors about situations that have arisen in their tutoring and engage in reflective practice on these issues as part of ongoing professional development. For pre-service tutors who are in a tutoring course, scenarios and tutorial observations offer such opportunities.

Teaching emotional intelligence also gives tutors a set of tools to identify the difference between when emotions can be worked with productively in a writing center setting and when counseling or mental health services are needed. Part of training in emotional intelligence should include inviting tutors to understand what resources on campus may be available to help students and when they should encourage students to seek those services. Tutors, then, can have information ready about the university's counseling center, how to manage anxiety or other stressors, and other campus resources. For example, during the COVID-19 crisis, given the heightened emotions in tutorials, Dana offered her tutors additional formal training in referral services and emotional intelligence, as well as "open" online sessions where they could talk through emotional issues that came up in tutorials.

Finally, emotional intelligence is a lifelong skill that will certainly serve tutors in their lives beyond writing center work and can be yet another "soft skill" that they carry with them, such as the many skills reported as part of the Peer Tutoring Alumni Project (Huges, et al.).

*Within the Tutorial: Metacognitive Strategies for Emotional Management*

As Lape notes in her content analysis of tutor training manuals, writing center practitioners have few explicit strategies for how to successfully manage emotional sessions. We offer one such research-supported set of practices rooted in research in writing development and writing transfer through the practice of metacognition. Returning to the Driscoll and Powell study, the authors identified "emotional management" as a key aspect of both short-term success and long-term writerly growth. These strategies are directly useful in a writing center setting and tie to the "emotional intelligence" features we described above.

Driscoll and Powell saw that successful students demonstrated a host of metacognitive "emotional management" strategies that helped student writers avoid negative emotional states or overcome them—and these are the kinds of strategies that tutors can model and share during emotional tutorial sessions. Metacognition is defined by the Council of Writing Program Administrators' *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* as a "habit of mind" that allows one to reflect and intervene on one's own thinking—and feeling—processes. For students in their study, emotional management was a conscious and deliberate effort to more effectively manage themselves and their emotional reactions to writing.

Driscoll and Powell identify four primary metacognitive strategies assisting learners with their

own emotional management, originally described in the work of Brianna M. Scott and Matthew G. Levy and expanded by Gwen Gorzelsky, et al. We offer these strategies adapted to the writing center context: metacognitive planning, metacognitive monitoring, metacognitive control, and metacognitive evaluation.

**Metacognitive Planning**

The first emotional management strategy is metacognitive planning. Students in Driscoll and Powell's study described engaging in direct behaviors to avoid heavy emotional situations like frustration, being overwhelmed, and feeling anxious. These strategies included planning out their week to maximize their time, organizing their research notes, finding quiet space where they could focus. We would add working with a tutor to outline prior to beginning writing or helping a student get on track and manage their time. Planning was largely used as an avoidance strategy by students—students specifically noted that they worked hard to avoid unpleasant emotional situations where they would be stressed or overwhelmed. Engaging in deliberate planning behavior allowed students—in increasing capacity as they moved throughout their four or more years as undergraduates—to successfully avoid these situations.

It is likely the case that writing center tutors are already having these discussions about planning, and small changes to post-session tutoring report forms or conference summaries can help these become more visible and explicit. For example, at New College of Florida, tutors complete a narrative post-session report form, but also check from a list of options to indicate what the foci of the session were. The addition of a "time/workload management" box helped the director see that nearly 25% of sessions involve a discussion of planning. Knowing that these discussions are happening in the session can give directors a sense of whether tutors would benefit from learning more strategies themselves (so that they can model how these use strategies for others) or how to share these strategies directly with their clients. It can also help directors see if a demand for these strategies exists and if so, they can choose to promote the center as a place where students can get help in managing their workload—something many students may find useful. Depending on the campus, additional programming in time, planning, and workload management through workshops or other resources may be beneficial.

Yet, even the most effective planning cannot solve frustration, confusion, and other common emotions students deal with regularly in college-level and high stakes writing. For in-the-moment issues, which are common in writing center sessions, two other metacognitive strategies are useful: metacognitive monitoring, and metacognitive control.

**Metacognitive Monitoring**

Driscoll and Powell found that students can consciously and carefully monitor their own emotions (rather than be overwhelmed by them); doing so leads to long-term gains and learning transfer. Monitoring is simply the conscious recognition of what is happening. Students know something is going "wrong" and that they are feeling overwhelmed or anxious. Tutors talking to students about recognizing their own challenges can be a good first step. Tutors may also help students observe their reactions and point out how subconscious actions or feelings may be driving their reactions.

**Metacognitive Control**

Metacognitive control refers to taking direct action as a result of metacognitive monitoring; according to Gorzelsky, et al., control is sometimes associated with monitoring. Sometimes, a student can recognize a problem (monitoring) but not do anything about it (which would require control). And so, control is the ability of writers to consciously and carefully control their own emotions using specific strategies; we recommend simple phrases such as "stepping back," "stepping away," or "taking a break." Tutors can help writers overcome these kinds of issues—the key from an emotional management perspective is offering them these as tools that aren't just one-time solutions, but tools they can use anytime the writer finds themselves in this kind of situation. These tools include seeking help, working through a problem step by step, stepping back from the problem, getting another perspective on the problem, or planning out a revision process.

For example, at the IUP Writing Center, tutors use a repeating back strategy to help students self-monitor and evaluate. Thus, a tutor supports the development of monitoring with "I hear you saying that" and responding by "when this happens to me I. . ." or "How about we do this. . ." Tutors at New College of Florida are equipped to offer a menu of options to students when metacognitive control is needed, including common strategies like putting plans on a whiteboard or having the student make an appointment with other campus resources, as well as less-common strategies such as offering students use of the center's meditation cushions in a quiet corner or offering the option to take the tutoring session outside and go on a walk around the plaza in front the of writing center. Sometimes those walks can be used to help a frustrated student relax; other times, those walks can be used to stimulate creative thinking (Oppezzo

and Schwartz). These options are presented *as options*, never one solution, and so the student is able to choose a strategy that feels comfortable to them.

After a tutoring session concludes or a writing process ends, a final metacognitive strategy can be useful to student writers: metacognitive evaluation.

**Metacognitive Evaluation**

Students can use reflection in the form of metacognitive evaluation to consider how they could have handled a particularly intense writing moment differently. Tutors can help students engage in metacognitive evaluation, especially if they save a few minutes at the end of the session to reflect on what was learned and think about how to use that knowledge in the future. These questions might take the form of a five-minute reflection at the end of the session that engages students in conversation: "I know this paper was difficult for you because of the time management issues you've shared. Is there something we talked about today you might want to try next time?" Creating such an action plan helps promote forward-reaching transfer (Salomon and Perkins). In Dana's former embedded writing specialist program at Oakland University, where developmental writing students were required to visit the writing center multiple times, tutors working with developmental writers built metacognitive evaluation into the tutorial sessions, asking students to reflect on their success and struggles with each paper and creating an action plan for how to accomplish their current writing project, and planning for the future.

Metacognition is a developmental process for student writers; teaching students about these processes and giving them emotional management tools can aid them as writers in the long term. Driscoll and Powell demonstrated that as students gained more experience and maturity as writers over the course of their college career, and as writing tasks grew often increasingly more complex, students in their study engaged in the above metacognitive strategies more frequently. As a college freshman, writers had metacognitive strategies, while the same college writers, four years later, routinely drew upon all of the strategies described above. If tutors are well versed in these metacognitive strategies, they can intervene in students' emotional moments, and turn them from unproductive and stressful moments of learning to productive and long-term developmentally generative moments of learning, perhaps helping writers achieve more emotional management earlier in their time at college.

*Within and Beyond the Tutorial: Mindfulness Techniques for Tutors and Students*

Metacognition offers us one strategy that can help students with emotional management rooted in attending to and directing one's thinking. A second thinking-based strategy, currently being explored throughout higher education, is the practice of mindfulness. Mindfulness practice, which is focused on cultivating awareness on the present moment, also seeks to foster self-acceptance, self-compassion, and a non-judgmental or non-attachment stance (Zamin).

Jon Kabat-Zinn pioneered mindfulness practice at the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in 1979, and since that time, mindfulness has been used in a variety of settings in higher education and beyond. Many universities are starting to offer training in mindfulness. Nadia Zamin's recent dissertation found that mindfulness-based approaches were useful for helping high stakes dissertation writers manage negative emotions and produce more writing. Writing centers, likewise, are a logical place to integrate this health-focused practice to support student writers as well as tutors engaged in writing center work. Mindfulness practices are wide ranging, and there are hundreds of specific strategies that can be used. In the next few paragraphs, we describe practices that Dana used in a tutoring course.

One practice is the "three-minute breath." This is a simple mindfulness practice that can be modeled during a tutor professional development session to help tutors reduce stress, ground, and focus. The strategy is simple: in the first minute, the facilitator asks each person to breathe and focus on a question (for tutor development, "how am I feeling as a tutor right now?"). In the second minute, the participants are told to simply pay attention to their breath. In the third minute, participants are asked to focus on both their breath and how their body feels. After this short introduction, the professional development session can move into discussing tutors' experiences, student writing, or another topic. This same practice can be employed by tutors in a writing center session with simple modifications, one minute of "how do I feel as a writer right now?"; one minute of breathing and calming; and a final minute focusing on their breath and body before getting into the writing. We also note the productive use of this strategy to start tutor education sessions during a crisis situation. This particular strategy is useful both for tutorials and for tutor education exercises.

A second useful mindfulness practice is a controlled breathing technique called "three deep breaths." If a student is particularly upset or emotional, the tutor can encourage the student to take three deep

breaths with them. Controlled breathing, or inhaling slowly, briefly holding the breath, and exhaling slowly, can counter the fight or flight response that triggers anxiety, mental fogginess, rapid heart rate, and more (Stahl, et al.). This again can be modeled in tutor education and used by tutors and students in sessions.
Third, offering tutors these mindfulness "stances" can also be helpful to aid tutors in helping students overcome stress and anxiety. These same stances can also aid tutors in addressing the challenge and emotional labor in dealing with difficult sessions: These stances, described by Bob Stahl, et al. are

- Intention: being willing to overcome anxiety (the goal here is simply getting a student to acknowledge that desire)
- Beginner's mind: asking the student to try to see the situation from a different perspective (how will you feel about this next week?)
- Self-compassion: accepting where you are in the moment and being kind to yourself. This is particularly useful for students who are upset that they are upset; it is encouraging them to be with their emotions, rather than shove them aside.
- Self-reliance: encouraging students to trust themselves to handle their feelings (especially when combined with metacognitive strategies above).

To train tutors in these stances, tutors can learn the stances through practicing each one of them (encourage them to work with the stances over a one-week period, for example), discussing the stances in the context of recent tutorials, and employing them in sessions and reporting back to the group. The stances also are helpful as tools for tutors themselves, both after sessions and in managing stress in life.

Finally, mindfulness practices can also be built into larger writing center structures. At New College of Florida, one tutor who had integrated mindfulness practices into his own writing process asked if he could offer the same in his own tutoring sessions. Other tutors were interested in this as well, so the tutor offered training in mindfulness techniques for some of the other tutors in a professional development session. Then, the center director made the decision to have the tutors who had completed the extra training put an "M" next to their names on the online schedule. At the top of the schedule, there is a note that reads, "Interested in a more mindful approach to writing? Try a SWA with an "M" next to their name!"[2]

For more resources to integrate mindfulness into a writing center setting, we specifically recommend Stahl, et al.'s *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook for Anxiety*; Jennifer Block-Lerner and LeeAnn Cardaciotto's *The Mindfulness-Informed Educator" Building Acceptance and Psychological Flexibility in Higher Education*; and Holly B. Rogers' *The Mindful Twenty-Something: Life Skills to Handle Stress...and Everything Else*. The first two books are useful for integrating mindfulness practices into the writing center as a workplace and as part of a writing center philosophy, while the third offers a number of key mindfulness strategies geared toward traditional-aged college students.

## Recognizing Our Work: Emotional Labor in Writing Center

While the above strategies are useful and productive for writing center tutors and the student writers they serve, educating tutors and engaging in this kind of work requires the acknowledgement that the labor of managing emotional challenges is a different kind of labor, known as "emotional labor." Emotional labor was first defined by Arlie Hochschild in the late 1980s to describe the emotional work that she observed people in service professions, such as flight attendants, as required to perform as part of their work. She recognized that while in personal life, emotions might serve to establish and maintain personal relationships, in a professional setting, they were simply another kind of "labor" that was part of employees' training and performance. Since Hochschild's *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, the concept of emotional labor has been expanded to many other service professions: nursing, social work, psychology, and teaching.

In the last few years, this term has also begun to be discussed in writing center settings, such as through the work of Rebecca Jackson, et al., who looked at the emotional labor of writing center directors, and Alison Perry, who explored emotional labor and tutoring. As Perry writes,

> Emotional labor in a writing center setting is recognizing that emotional management is often part of a writer's process. Tutors engage in emotional labor when they recognize the emotional needs of the students and work with students to productively manage and channel emotions surrounding the writing process.

Perry argues that we need to "actively work to train our staff to be as responsive to clients' emotional needs as they are to their academic ones."

The concern here is that most people who are in writing centers, either as directors or tutors, come to writing centers out of an inherent desire to "help" others. This helping behavior makes very good tutors with a high level of empathy and directors with passion

and enthusiasm, but this high level of empathy and passion can lead to burnout, as is the case in other helping professions such as nursing (Penphrase, et al). Even if tutors are better trained and more prepared to engage in emotional labor and help students manage emotions, this labor—especially unacknowledged—can take a deep toll on those who perform it. However, if emotional labor is acknowledged as another form of labor that is part of tutoring practice, directors can educate tutors about it, which benefits not only the writers served, but also tutors' professional development. Because the concept of emotional labor is only beginning to be considered in writing center scholarship, writing center practitioners can take cues from the "caring" professions, like nursing, social work, education, and psychology, who recognize and engage in direct training. We now turn to several methods of acknowledging and supporting emotional labor in writing centers.

*Create Supportive Spaces for Talking about Emotional Sessions and Self-Care.*

As part of developing emotional intelligence and metacognitive awareness among tutors and students, it is useful to consider the role the writing center plays as a "supportive space" for students, tutors, and faculty. In "Training for Triggers: Helping Writing Center Consultants Navigate Emotional Sessions," Perry describes tutors' responses to emotional sessions and offers brief suggestions for how writing center administrators might create structures to help their tutors perform this labor: staff meetings and open discussion, creating a supportive WC environment where staff are not overburdened, and partnering with counseling and wellness centers and other support resources on campus. Hillary Degner, et al. offer similar advice, and advocate for writing centers as being "safe spaces" for tutors who were struggling with mental health challenges. Given the work of these scholars, writing centers can be designed intentionally for offering this kind of environment. This might be done more informally between tutors and directors, or in a more formal tutoring professional development session where open space is dedicated to processing work. We now consider some specific ways for creating supportive and welcoming spaces to help address emotional labor.

*Physical Space*

The field of environmental psychology and its subfield interior design psychology have explored the ways in which physical spaces can impact an individual's emotions. For example, studies on lighting have revealed that workplaces that are too dark or too bright can negatively impact the mods of those working in them (Kuller, et al.). Thus, the physical space of the writing center can be analyzed for its impact on tutor (and student) emotions. Many writing centers seek to have a welcoming, comfortable, and safe space for students and tutors. A tutor break room, a self-care corner, a welcoming space with coffee and cookies—these kinds of spaces can continue to be cultivated for both students and tutors. For example, when Jennifer was hired at her institution, the writing center was sparsely furnished with a mix of cast off furniture from other offices at the college. Though the room was large, the drab, sterile space was not inviting to students or peer tutors. Jennifer negotiated funds for refurbishing the center as a part of her job offer and was able to redecorate the center by creating distinct "rooms" within the larger space. New furniture included a sofa, front porch style rocking chairs, brightly colored bookshelves, artificial greenery, as well as coffee pot and electric kettle for the "bistro" corner. Recent additions include meditation cushions and noise-canceling headphones. As a result of these changes, students noted that the space felt welcoming and cozy, as one student said, "It makes me happy just to walk in here." We also note the importance of creating physically accessible spaces for students with disabilities—accessible spaces can benefit all students.

*Self-Care Techniques for Tutors and Students*

Beyond the physical space, another way to help tutors manage difficult emotional sessions is through the practice of self-care—recognizing the need for it, training in how to do it, and de-stigmatizing self-care practices. In the field of psychology, for example, self-care is seen as critical to what Janet S. Coster and Milton Schwebel call "well-functioning" or the idea that a professional can engage in a practice over a long period of time and not be quickly burned out by their work. As Jeffrey E. Barnett et, al suggest, self-care practices are now being widely recognized as necessary not only for professional competency for ethical reasons, including in composition studies (Driscoll, Leigh, and Zamin). And while the self-care practices that psychologists use to address emotional challenges on a day-to-day basis are likely more than writing center tutors need, some of their suggestions can easily be adapted to writing center settings.

In her peer tutoring course and tutor education, Dana uses the following strategies to teach and model self-care strategies to tutors, particularly when engaging in difficult sessions:

- Acknowledge the different kinds of labor of tutoring and the need for self-care; recognize

the broad number of professions who see this as part of professional work (caring professions).

- Discuss self-care strategies that have "worked" for tutors in other aspects of their life; get a list on the board for discussion.
- Have each tutor create a "self-care plan" for the semester and report back on the plan at the end of the term.
- Model self-care strategies informally; set a good example of time management, taking time off, and taking care of oneself, and talk openly about it in class and in staff meetings.

At Jennifer's institution, discussions of self-care are not uncommon, so in their writing center tutors frequently share their own self-care strategies with students. The Assistant Director and Director also occasionally remind the tutors they need to take their own advice. Modeling behavior can be an extremely effective way of encouraging tutors to engage in self-care practice.

## Conclusion: Changing the Dominant Narrative

In this piece, we have argued that creating a supportive climate throughout campus includes considering how we might "tutor the whole person" and attend to writers' emotional states to support their writerly growth. We've explored the ways in which the writing center dominant narrative has traditionally resisted addressing students' emotions, and yet, we also recognize its inherent importance, not only in creating a campus-wide, emotionally supportive climate, but also in supporting writers in their short term writing products and long-term writing development. We note that while these issues are always of relevance, they are of particular relevance in crisis or high stress situations for individuals, communities, or cultures. In tutoring the whole person, we recognize two distinct aspects that need to take place, both of which we have begun to consider in this piece. First is the need for developing training materials and a body of research that considers the role of emotional intelligence and emotional management in the practice of tutoring. Second is the need to recognize this work as emotional labor and to create safe spaces for tutors to be supported. While our article has attempted to provide research-supported practices and descriptions of these steps in our own centers, we recognize the "newness" of considering these issues, and therefore encourage future researchers, directors, and tutors to further investigate, assess, and develop new training methods specific to writing centers. As next steps in this work, we see not only a need for more discussion of the "tutoring the whole person" in writing center settings, but also research-supported practices that are rooted in writing center spaces.

Considering the role of the "whole person" in the writing center allows us not only better writing center practitioners, help writers produce better writing, but also helps us produce better writers and better people. Emotions, emotional labor, and self-care practices are certainly critical to the work writing centers do—and we encourage the field to think about some of this work as part of the professional core of our practice. By attending to some of these "whole person" issues, the writing center is poised to be a hospitable space for all.

## Notes

1. Daniel Eisenberg, et al. noted that it isn't possible to determine whether there are more students with mental health challenges now than before because comparative studies don't exist. The increase in students reporting mental health diagnosis mirrors the same increase in the general population, so it may be that the slow but ongoing de-stigmatization of mental health issues means that more people are seeking treatment
2. We note that we've provided three strategies that we've used in our centers and professional development—but many other strategies for aiding students with emotional management exist. These may include learning to read body language and other stress management techniques.

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