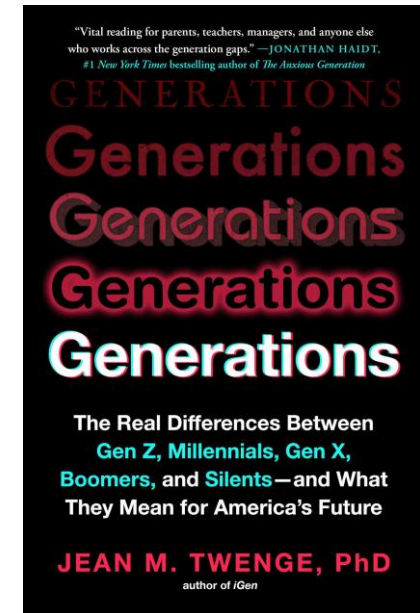


Talk the Talk: Generational Communication on Campus

Colleen Ehrnstrom, PhD

Counseling and Psychiatric Services
(CAPS) Embedded Program







You're Not Rude. You're Just From a
Different Decade.

What's Causing Disconnect?

Technology Divide



Information Overload



Shifting Norms & Values



Fragmented Culture



**“Assumptions
are the stories
we write
about others...
without ever
asking them.**



me adding "with all due
respect" to a statement with
zero respect



What is your academic paradigm?

- **Where** did you attend college (public, size)?
- What did you **pay**?
- How did **authority** work?
- How was **information** accessed?
- What did **success** require?





How does
this impact
your
assumptions
on campus?

- What does **effort** look like?
- What does **respect** mean?
- How do you measure **success**?
- How do you **communicate**?
- What is the **purpose** of communication?

Four Academic Paradigms



Gatekeeping & Scarcity

Protect & Preserve



Process & Stability

Maintain & Standardize



Collaboration & Transition

Connect & Adapt



Speed & Uncertainty

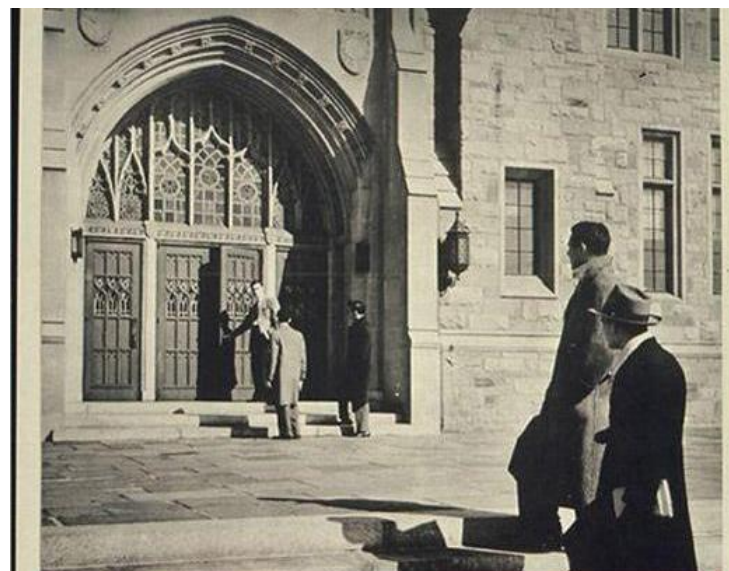
React & Pivot





UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO
MAY 4 1912

SHALL I GO BACK TO SCHOOL?



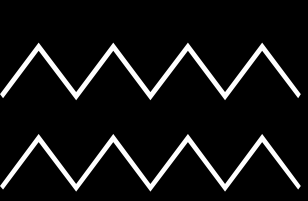
CONSULT YOUR NEAREST OFFICE OF THE
VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

Paradigm 1: Gatekeeping and Scarcity

Boomers

- College access was limited
- Authority was unquestioned
- If you listened to the system, the system worked
- Professors were keepers of knowledge





Gatekeeping and Scarcity



Core belief: Access and retention must be earned



Questioning authority looked like ignorance, not independence



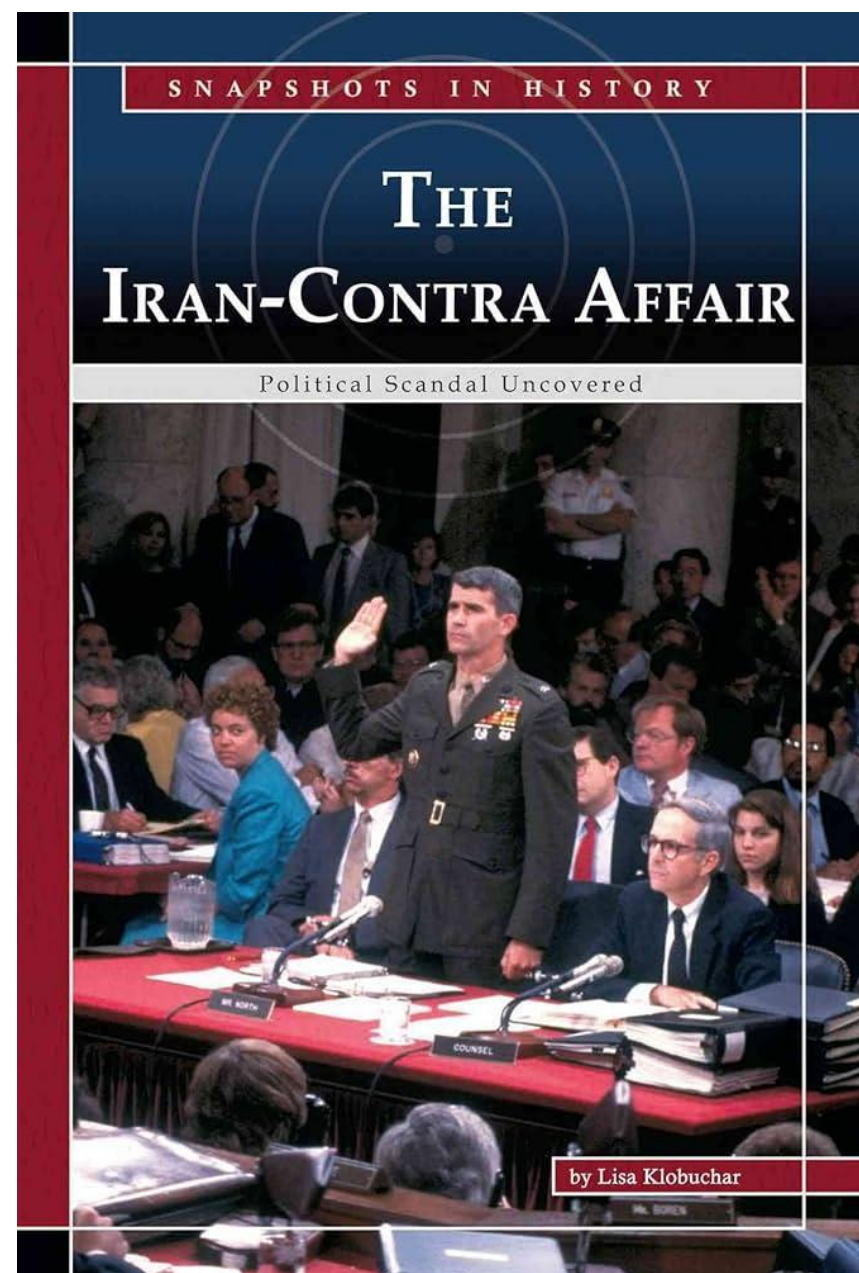
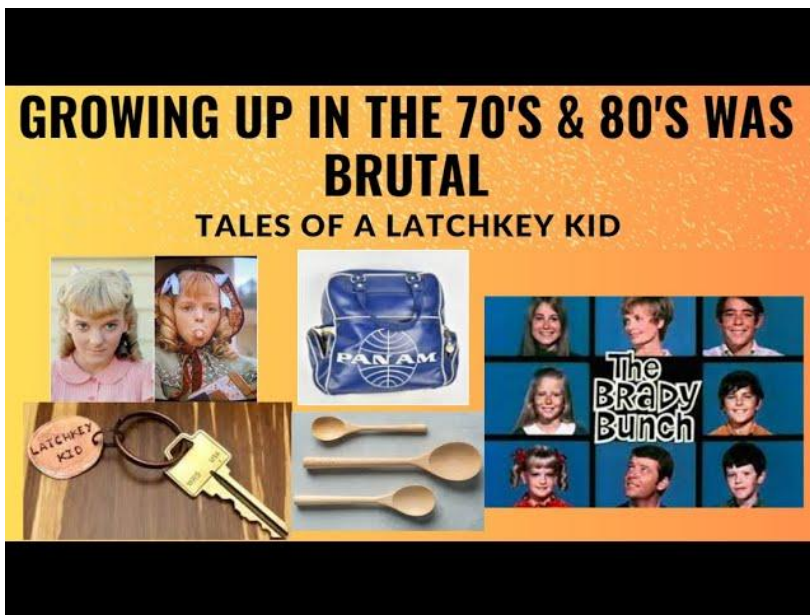
Strictness meant respect and excellence



Respect is demonstrated through behavior, not emotion



Systems work best when people “know their place”

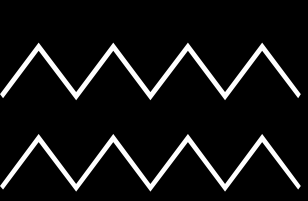


Paradigm 2: Process and Stability

Gen X

- College focused on fairness
- Fairness meant consistency and clear rules
- Emphasis on documentation and accountability
- Rules protect you when people don't





Process and Stability



Core belief: Fairness means following the process without vulnerability or groveling



Systems create fairness



Respect is doing the work



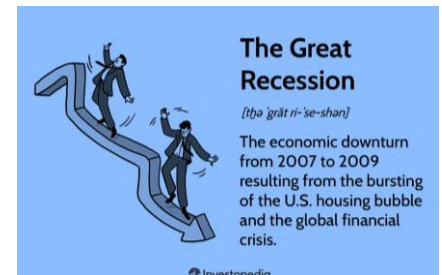
Respect is knowing expectations, not asking for exceptions



Competence is demonstrated through compliance



support valued
community differentiation
accommodations acceptance
diversity
ability inclusion

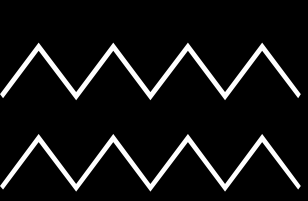


Paradigm 3: Collaboration and Transition

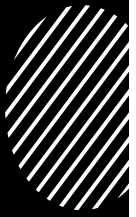
Millennials

- College now about success via support
- Collaboration teaches competence
- Care is a moral responsibility
- Flattened hierarchy
- College is now a service and a right





Collaboration and Transition



Core belief: Support means collaboration



Conversational, flexible, and responsive



Engagement, availability, and mutual understanding



Respect is mutual and collaborative



Flexibility is now ethical, rather than unfair

THE GROWING OPERATIONAL
CHALLENGES OF OVERLAPPING
MIGRATION GLOBAL CRISES:
MANAGEMENT THE IMPACTS OF
UNDERSTANDING FOOD INSECURITY
OF AND CLIMATE CHANGE
MIGRATION ISSUES ON MIGRATION
ENCOURAGES AND DISPLACEMENT
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



More people today are saying that a four year college degree was **not worth** the cost.

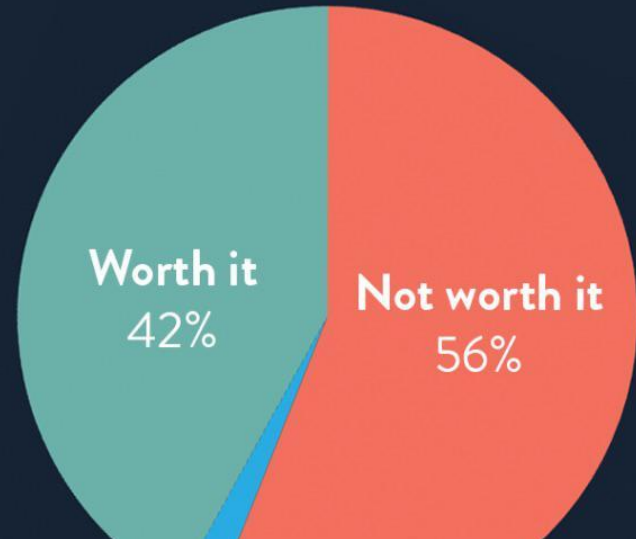
Paradigm 4: Speed and Uncertainty

Generation Z

College helps them:

- keep options open
- avoid catastrophic mistakes
- stay credential-eligible
- maintain momentum

“Does this help me or slow me down?”





Speed and Uncertainty



Core belief: institutions don't get automatic loyalty, they get trial periods



Trust is provisional



Respect is responsiveness and transparency



Social Justice is essential



Fast action prevents missed opportunities (Speed = Control)



Constant cognitive Overload

Academic Paradigm Lens

Paradigm	Core Belief	Communication Style	What Feels Respectful	Contextual Lens
 Boomers	Access must be earned.	 Formal, hierarchical	 What Feels Respectful	 Gatekeeping & Scarcity
 Gen X	"Follow the system."	 Email, documentation	 Clarity, rules	 Process & Stability
 Millennials	"Let's work together."	 Conversational, flexible	 Responsiveness	 Collaboration & Transition
 Gen Z	"Just help me navigate this."	 Short, digital, direct	 Availability, transparency	 Speed & Uncertainty

These paradigms describe dominant academic logics over time, individuals may span multiple paradigms.

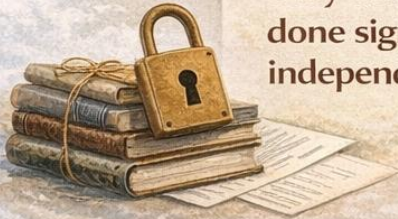
Let Me Know
If You Have
Any Questions



What “Let me know if you have any questions” Can Mean

Gatekeeping Paradigm

- Only ask me if you’ve done significant independent work



Process-Based Paradigm

- Follow the outlined steps and reach out if something specific is unclear



“Let me know if you have any questions”

Collaboration Paradigm

- We can talk through this together



- Follow the outlined steps and reach out if something specific is unclear

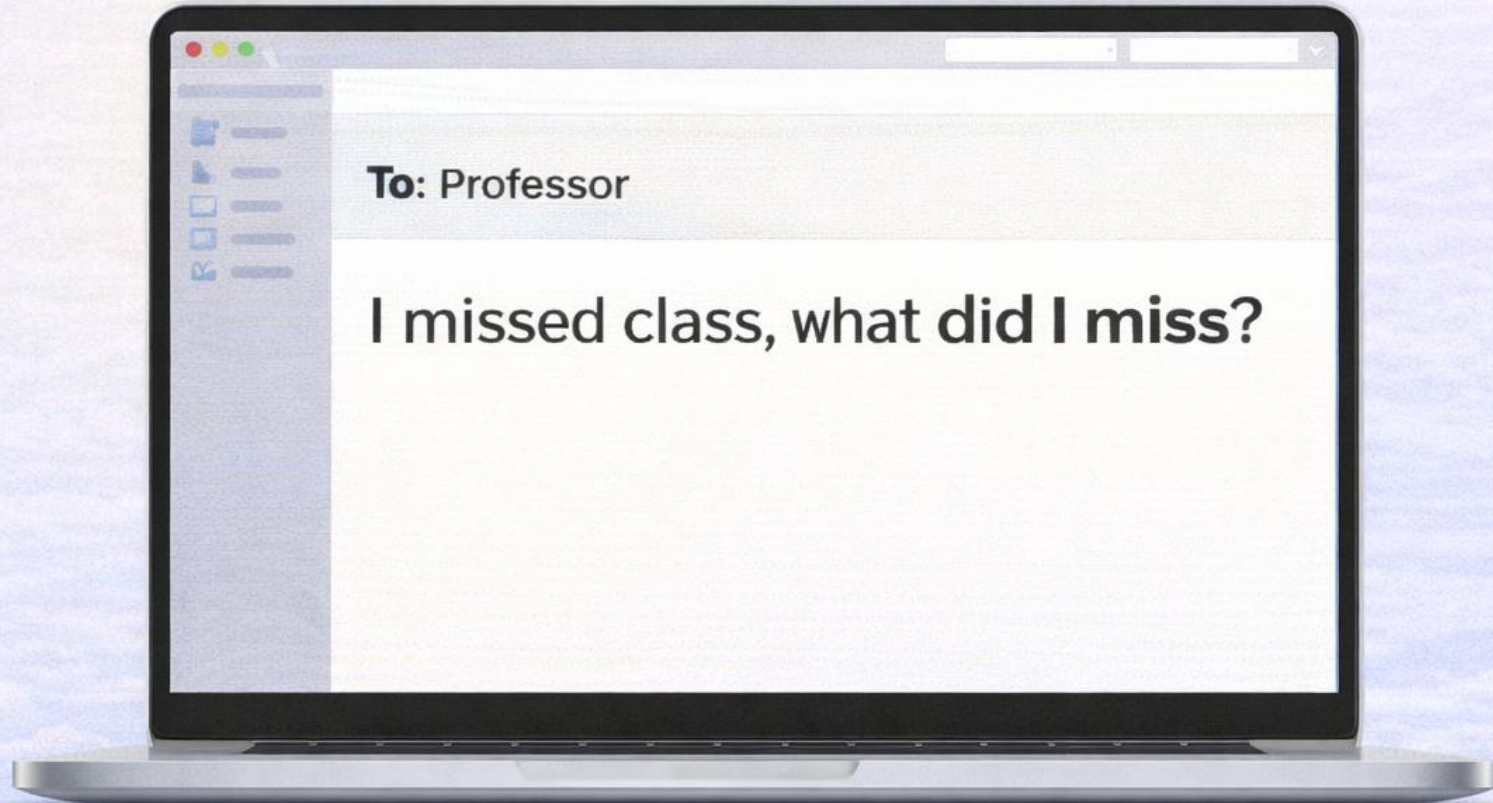
Speed & Uncertainty Paradigm

- Ask immediately



- Ask immediately

The Student's Email



The Email That Sparked a Communication Breakdown

Gen Z Student

Speed Paradigm

- Efficient
- Direct
- Neutral core question

The same email.
Two different reads.

Hey, I missed class.
What did I miss?

Faculty

Gatekeeping / Process Paradigm

- Context and respect
- Proof of effort
- Preparation

Will get them the info they need, fast!

Come on.
That's it?

?!

Gen Z Student

Speed Paradigm

- Efficient
- Direct
- Neutral core question

Will get them the info they need, fast!

Faculty

- Gatekeeping / Process Paradigm
- Context and respect
- Proof of effort
- Preparation

No respect for my time,
my class, or hard work.
Has education come to this?

Public/Agenda



Center for Academic
Success and Engagement
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BERKELEY

The Advising Disconnect

Gen Z Student

Uncertainty Paradigm

They were nice,
but I am still confused.

This feels like
having a map with
“You Are Here”

Gen Z Student:
Support means
and direction.

Clarke



Advisor (Millennial or Gen X)

Collaboration Paradigm

I gave them
all the options.
I didn't want to tell
them what to do.

I let them choose
their adventure!

Advisor (Millennial or Gen X):
Empowerment means choice
and autonomy





The Missed Deadline

I'm sorry, I missed the deadline.
Could I have an extension?

Deadlines were clearly outlined.
It has to be fair to everyone.

They didn't take things seriously.

They don't understand what I'm going through

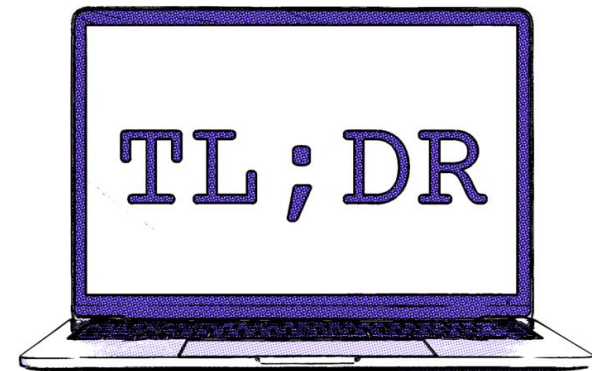
Feels Unseen

They didn't take things seriously.

Firm Response

Fairness Matters





Why Didn't They Read It?

We literally told them.

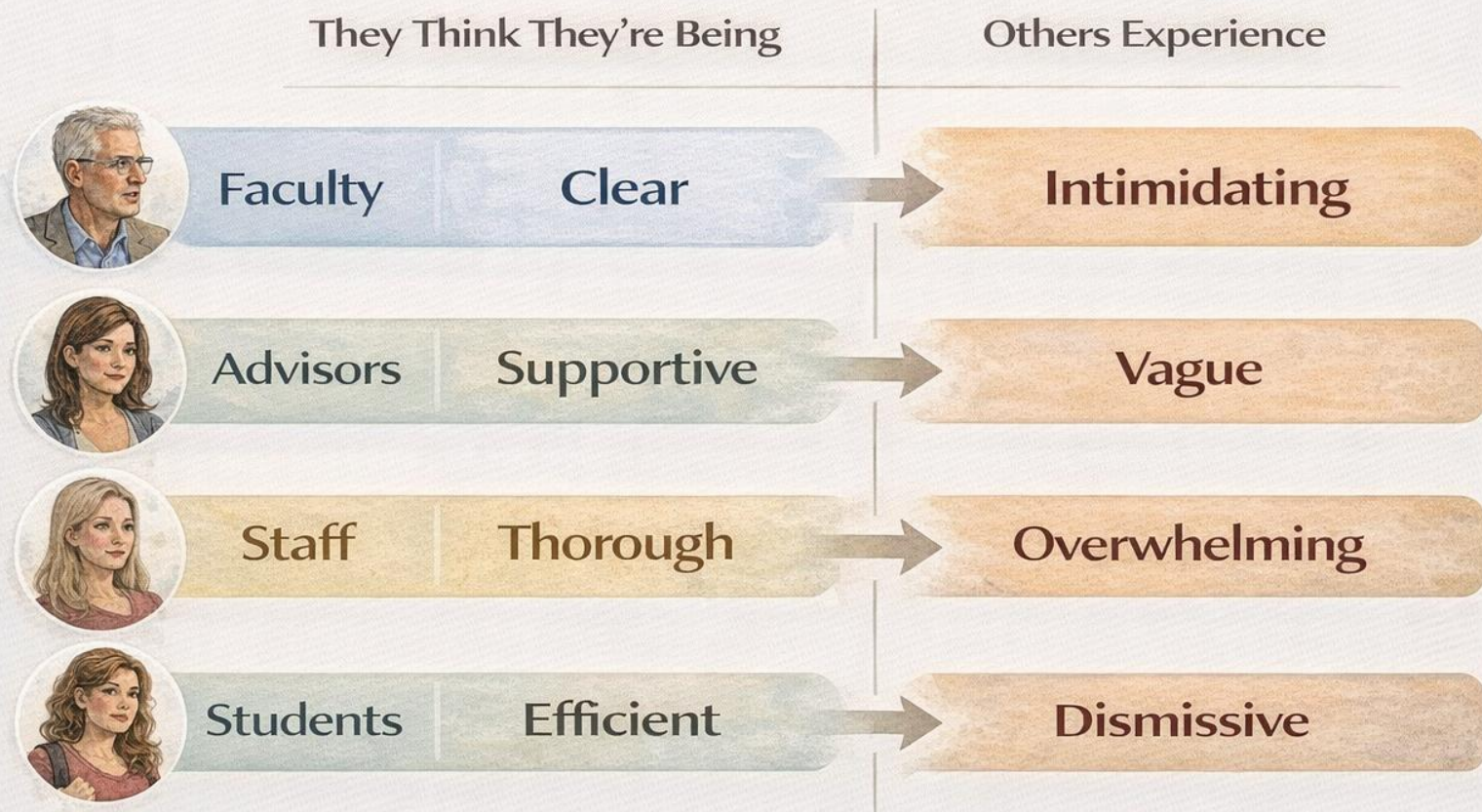
Why is this so confusing?!

Detailed Email Explaining Policy Information

- ▶ Please read this carefully. It contains important information about the new policy and how it will affect you. It is a detailed email explaining the policy information.
- Government is now taking action... to ensure security.
- Emergency services will be able to find out about the situation.
- Government will be able to find out about the situation.
- Government will be able to find out about the situation.

Important Details Missed
Students skim email, panic later

What Each Group Thinks They're Doing vs. What It Looks Like



Things may be a bit
difficult right now







FLEXIBILITY IS WELLBEING

PHYSICAL FLEXIBILITY

Enhances bodily
performance

Decreases risk of
injury

Reduces physical
stress

Decreases pain

Increases range of
motion

increases body balance

PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY

Enhances mental performance
(ex: problem-solving)

Decreases sense of being
beaten down

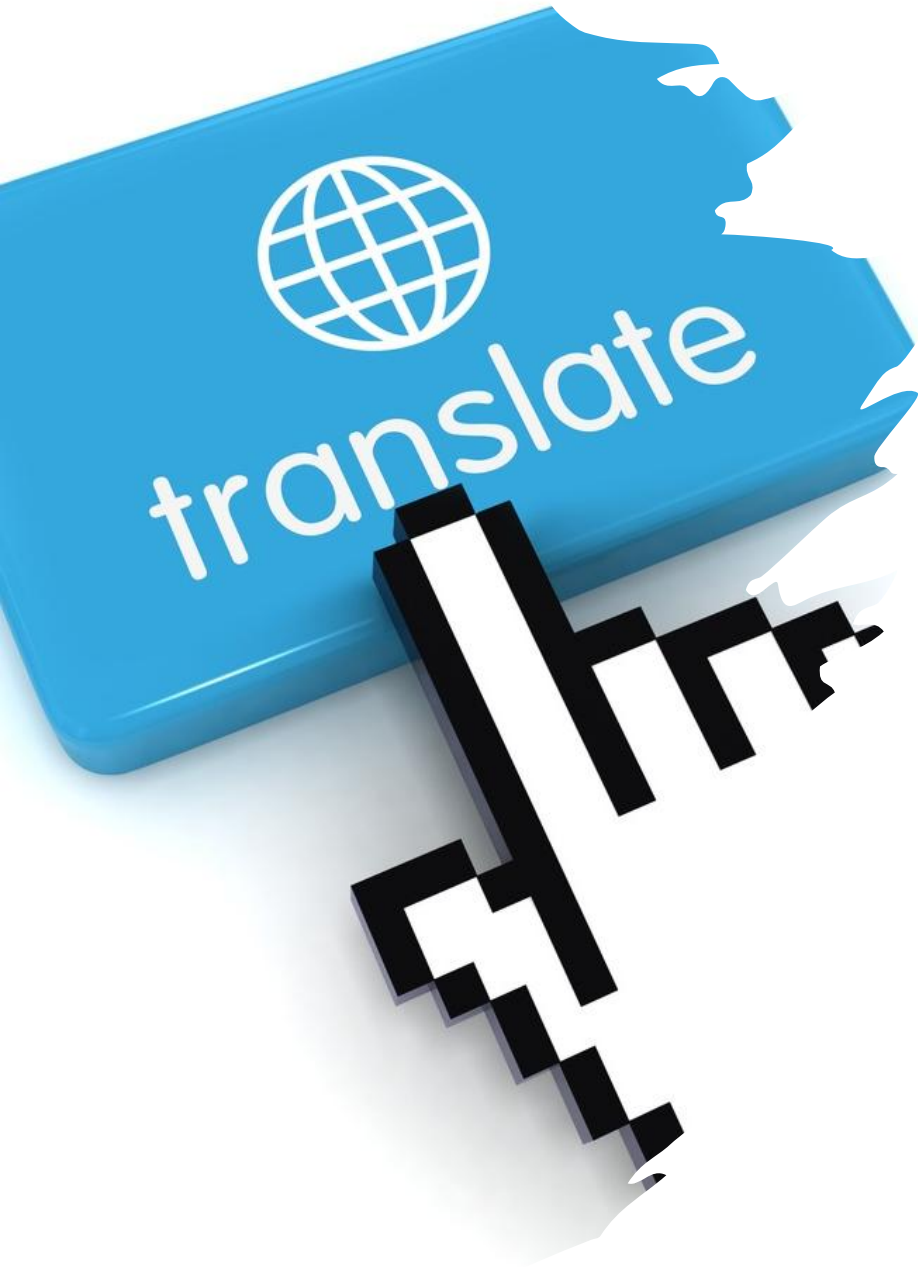
Reduces mental/emotional
stress

Decreases sense of suffering,
victimization

Increases range of actions
you can take

Increases life balance



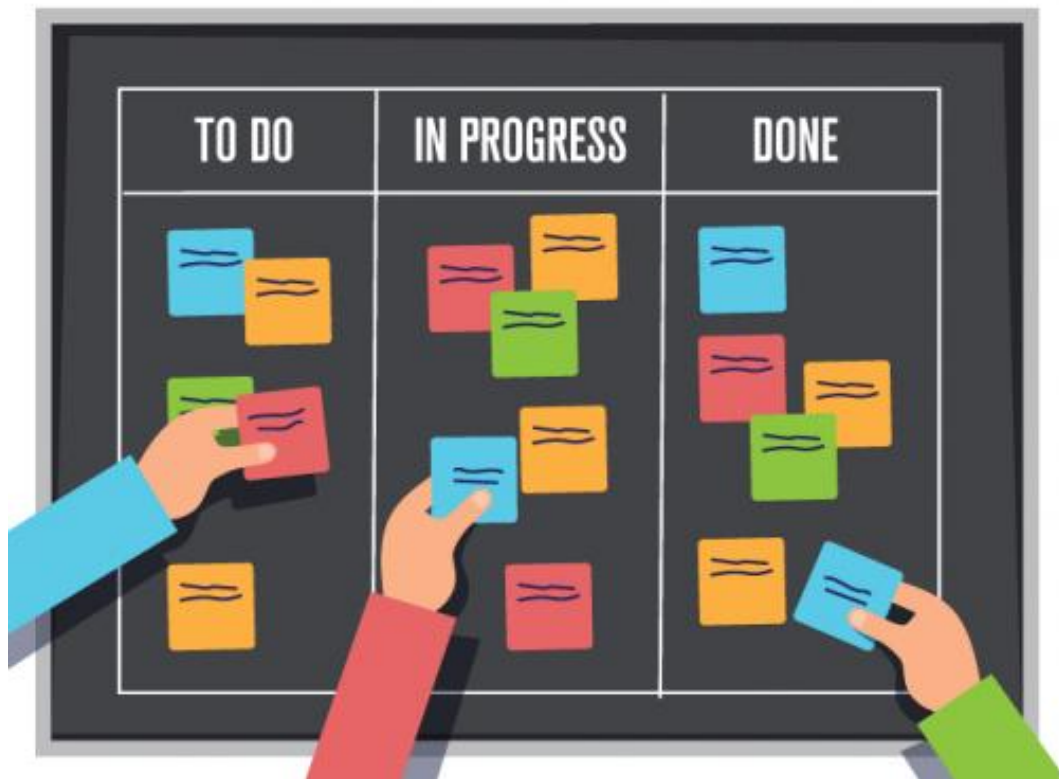


Why are they like this??!!

What academic paradigm might this be coming from?

What does respect/success look like in that paradigm?

What assumption am I making about intent?



CLIENT:

It's so good but can we
make one more tweak?

ME:



Strategy #1: Make Rules Visible

How to Write an Email

Subject

Salutation

Body

Closing

To: Ms.Holly@EnglishUnits.com

CC / BCC

Subject: Sick Today – Homework Question

Dear Ms. Holly,

I hope you are having a nice week! I am writing to let you know that I am absent today because I'm sick. I hope I will be better by tomorrow.

I have a question about our homework that is due today. Is it possible for me to turn it in tomorrow when I am back? I can also scan the pages and email them today. Please let me know which is best.

Best regards,

1. Explain expectations
2. Put it everywhere

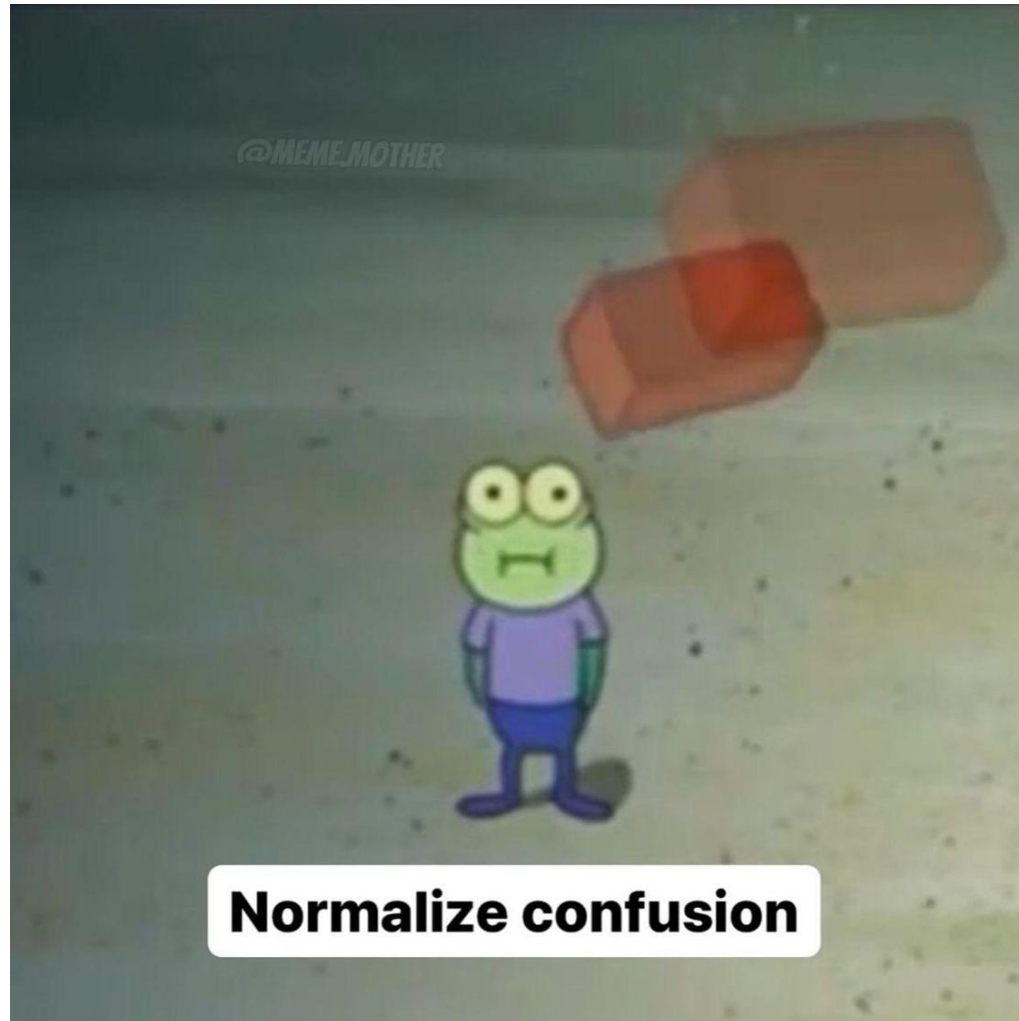
Strategy #2: Use Dual Communication

Choice + Recommendation Examples in Academic Settings

Offer options to students and suggest the best approach for clarity.

Scenario	Choice	Recommendation
 Course Announcements	▶ Check updates via Email, Canvas, or Video	▶ <u>We suggest</u> checking Canvas first for all key dates.
 Research Opportunities	▶ Attend Info Session, ▶ Read PDF, or View Infographic	▶ <u>We recommend</u> the info session to ask questions directly.
 Study Strategies	▶ Use Flashcards, Notes, or ▶ Study Groups	▶ <u>We recommend</u> starting with summary notes.
 Office Hours / Advising	▶ Visit In-Person, ▶ Virtual, or Email Questions	▶ <u>We recommend</u> a virtual meeting for detailed help.
 Department Policies	▶ Read Policy Online, ▶ PDF, or Attend Q&A Session	▶ <u>We suggest</u> reviewing the PDF before the Q&A.
 Workshops / Training	▶ Watch Recording, Join Live, ▶ or Read Guide	▶ <u>We recommend</u> joining live for real-time discussion.

Strategy #3: Normalize Translation



Strategy #4: Don't Personalize Confusion



Strategy #5: Create the Opportunity for Growth

Growth Mindset Activities

for College Students



S
U
R
V
I
V
E



Flourishing

Existing

T
H
R
I
V
E