

Michael Metzler



“It is human nature to think wisely and act foolishly.”
~Anotole France

Dear Psychology Students:

Stop for a moment and think. What’s the stupidest thing you’ve ever done? Wait! Don’t blurt it out loud. Just give yourself a minute to think about it. (Time lapse here... Don’t read this! Why are you reading this? You’re supposed to be thinking about stupid things!) Now, what’s the smartest thing you’ve ever done? (Time lapse here...see above for remarks scolding those who insist on reading ahead when they should be thinking quietly). You see, our behaviors cover some vast terrain. Thinking about and studying such things is what psychology is all about. The word itself comes from the Greek "psukhe," which means breath or life, and "logos," which means word or reason. So, it’s the reasoning or study of the mental processes and behaviors that give us life.

Another thing psychologists do is to experiment with our behaviors, which often involves manipulating our environment to gauge how we’ll behave. You have already practiced this many times. Just think about how often you’ve “trained” your parents or teachers to get a desired outcome. Think about how we behave here in school. Simply by placing a clock on the wall and ringing a bell several times a day, we have been controlled to behave certain ways. (Isn’t this stuff fun?!) How many of you shower the same way each day or need certain colored notebooks to feel comfortable? How many of you sit at the same table in the cafeteria? Is it because of the assigned seating? (Isn’t this stuff fun?!) How many of you can cheat without batting an eye or go 24 hours without looking in a mirror? How many of you think your car says something about you? How many of you think you’ve been controlled by subliminal messages in rock music? How many of you yawn when you see someone else yawning? (Isn’t this stuff fun... and interesting?!)

In a nutshell, the field of psychology considers what we do and why we do it. What makes it tough, however, is that it involves human beings, their quirks, and all the factors that drive us. It’s pretty tough to place a person in a petri dish or under a microscope for examination, so it’s pretty inexact, and some have even called it a “soft” science. But one thing psychology is good at is being sensitive & sympathetic. This field exists to help us, after all. And that’s an important element that should make its way into our classroom. Conducting ourselves in here must involve respect and empathy for others. That will ensure a pleasurable, safe, and enriching experience as we try to better understand ourselves and others.

I’m excited for our journey together.

Warmest regards,

Michael Metzler