Chapter 1, Understanding Motivation


Stories from the Elders

This chapter has focused upon several important principles that can either improve or hinder your ability to stay the course and reach your goals. You have been asked to consider, “Why am I in college?” and “What's involved with choosing a major?” or “What are my interests and my values?” Once you begin to answer these questions you will need to consider, “How do I maintain my locus of control and stay motivated, focused, and responsible for my success?”

This is an exciting time in your life. You have the ability to choose to become a stronger more focused individual. You may believe that your success is part of a larger success--one that impacts your family and your community. You may be the first in your family to attend college, or you might feel community pressure to become an educational role model and an example for others to follow. These types of expectations can create greater motivation for success as long as you remain true to your own self-assessment of your interests and your values.

To bring forth a new perspective on learning strategies and techniques for college success, we have woven traditional Native-American stories into the heart of each chapter. The oral tradition of storytelling is an ancient practice that all indigenous cultures embrace. Some stories focus upon creation and the spiritual beliefs of the tribe, while others teach a moral lesson. Stories can be historical, can depict a special and sacred geographic characteristic, or impart important cultural knowledge and history to its people. Stories are entertaining and sometimes comical, but all will usually promote a beneficial change in attitude toward a basic value or responsibility as members of that community. Some stories teach about relationships with other living creatures including people, animals, and elements like the wind, water, and the universe. All stories are intergenerational and intra-familial in that stories are passed down from grandfather to child and so on.

Some tribes are willing to share their stories for the good of all and some nations are quite protective and believe that stories can only be shared with others when given as gifts. One of the co-authors of this textbook, Larry Gauthier, is a Woodland Cree and he has asked the elders for permission to use their stories. One of the elders “took the tobacco and prayed that their students and those who use the text will find value and meaning in the stories.” The stories take on a spirit of their own and, in a way, define a shared cultural experience and belief system of a community. With that in mind, we share with you a collection of stories.

The story you are about to read is one that is shared with us from the Maidu Tribe located in Northern California. The story of “To'lowim Woman and Butterfly Man” has as its main intention to teach about self-control and to be faithful and dedicated to the family. Within this story, are several ideas that correlate to the subject of motivation as discussed in this chapter.
To'lowim Woman and Butterfly Man

Retold by Beatrice Zamora, based on a Maidu story

In the old days, during the time of the Deer Drive, To'lowim Man was fishing and hunting with his tribal brothers and when they returned home they would begin ceremonies to give thanks. To'lowim Woman was a good wife and mother, but she was bored during these days when women were to keep their distance from the men.

On a bright and sunny day, To'lowim Woman decided to take a walk with her baby. She carried her baby in a cradleboard, strapped to her back, and walked out to see the beautiful flowers that were in bloom. Along the way, she looked for berries and roots and eventually saw various brightly colored flowers. After awhile, she sat beside a shady bush to rest, while her baby laid safely asleep in his cradleboard. Soon a large and brightly colored butterfly flew by her.

To'lowim Woman was amazed by the butterfly's beauty. She had never seen a butterfly so large, so strong, and with such vibrant colors like blues as deep as turquoise, yellows like the golden poppies, and greens like the iridescence of the abalone shell. To'lowim Woman was mesmerized by its beauty. She reached out to touch the butterfly and it stroked her hand as it flew by, sending a shiver through her body.

Without thinking much about her baby and knowing that the baby would sleep safely under the shady bush, To'lowim Woman ran after the butterfly. She hadn't felt the ticklish feel of passion for some time and she knew she had to catch this butterfly for her own. She ran this way and that way following the fluttering butterfly. Each time she stretched to catch the butterfly, it flittered further away and To'lowim Woman lost all sense of time and distance.

As the day turned to dusk, To'lowim Woman found herself in a valley she had never seen before and she dropped to the ground with exhaustion. Soon the butterfly landed next to To'lowim Woman to keep her safe through the dark night. When she awoke as the morning sun warmed her face, she found a handsome and strong man holding her in his arms. He said, “I am Butterfly Man and you have followed me to this Butterfly Valley. Come with me and we will have a happy and safe life together.” To'lowim Woman could not resist the passion she felt for Butterfly Man, so she agreed to follow him. He warned her to hold on to his belt. He told her she would be enchanted by other butterflies along the way, but if she held on tightly and stayed the course, they would reach his home before sunset.

As they traveled through the beautiful valley, filled with flowers that To'lowim Woman had never gazed upon before, she became very excited about her new life. She knew she would be happy with her Butterfly Man and that she would never feel the boredom of the past. They wove through the valley swiftly, and butterflies approached. Many of vibrant virile colors like red, purple, and orange flew close to To'lowim Woman, taunting her to reach out for just one touch. She tried to stay the course, but could no longer restrain herself and reached out with one hand to touch a huge butterfly. She lost her hold of Butterfly Man and soon found herself in a whirlwind of thousands of butterflies leading her in every direction.
Butterfly Man continued on his journey and To'lowim Woman could not reach him, even though she tried. The butterflies clouded her vision and eventually, she lost all sight of Butterfly Man. To'lowim Woman kept chasing her butterfly dreams, but could never catch one. Her clothes became tattered and torn as she brushed against thorny bushes and trees and eventually To'lowim Woman found herself nearly naked. The people say To'lowim Woman lost her way in the valley and never returned home.

For more information about the Maidu Tribe of California, visit their website at www.maidu.com.

**Talking Circle**

Use these questions for discussion in a talking circle or consider at least one of these questions as you respond in a journal entry. For the talking circle, students sit in a circle and one student speaks at a time. The professor asks a question and the first student on the left responds. Then move to the next student on the left to continue the discussion. Students may pass if they do not wish to speak. It is important to listen carefully and respect the contributions of each student.

1. What are some of the possible challenges you will encounter with self-control as you begin to focus more time and energy toward your study?

2. How will your family, friends, or community respond to your time away from them?

3. How can you help your family, friends, and community to better understand and appreciate the educational/career goals you have set for yourself?

4. What characteristics do you share with Tolowim Woman?

5. To'lowim Woman struggles with creating balance in her life and she lets passion take control. How is passion related to your life’s goals on a personal and educational level?

6. What will it mean to you if you are pulled in other directions by the butterflies? Can this be a positive reaction?

**Quotes for the Margin**

Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect. We are a part of the earth and it is part of us. Chief Seattle, Suquamis

Everything a power does, it does in a circle. (Lakota)

Every fire is the same size when it starts. (Seneca)
Notes:
