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Emotion and spontaneity as part of Intellectual Candour

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We have been delighted with the engagement (ranging from delight, concern, challenge and extension) with our paper proposing “intellectual candour” as a mechanism to enhance learning for both learner and teacher¹. We agree with Bynum and Artino (2019) that emotion is *part of learning*². As others have noted, it is problematic to consider emotion as something to *manage* so ‘learning’ can take place, without the pollution or entanglement of feelings^{3,4}. We feel that in our term “intellectual candour”, the term *intellectual* keeps learning as a central purpose while the word *candour* embraces the emotional risk inherent in sharing knowledge with others. The very notion of exposing your underbelly for the sake of learning (of others and self), is an act that is emotionally laden, and has potential emotional consequences. One may argue that *the content* of any disclosure could be assigned into more cognitive or emotional hemispheres, however we are not certain that this delineation is as simple as it seems. In reading Bynum and Artino (2019)’s line of argument, we reflected on our own definitions, examples and, in particular, on our phrasing. We noticed that we previously linked hearts and minds when talking about intellectual candour⁵; and hope that we implicitly, if not explicitly, suggest that the affective and the cognitive are always intertwined.

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In the second letter, the Med Ed journal to add] state the risk inherent in “formalizing the concept to promote learning....Applying this as a learning methodology undercuts the spontaneity that makes these intellectual meanderings both convincing and heartfelt”⁶. We agree, this is indeed a tension that needs to be navigated, somewhat similar to the tension of being vulnerable without dashing credibility. We also think spontaneity and authenticity are critical but cannot be dictated. Educators should not be in the business of pursuing ‘prescribed’ intellectual candour; indeed, we have outlined some common manifestations of faux candour where the ‘source’ may look vulnerable but not feel vulnerable. However, particular learning designs, activities or approaches can *afford* conditions for intellectual risk taking and genuine co-construction. We can seek to cultivate these circumstances that lend themselves to *learning* through intellectual candour. Our next research priority is to explore conditions that foster productive intellectual candour in learners and teachers across contexts, taking account of the societal structures that constitute power and cultural capital.

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³ Bynum W & Artino A. Who Am I, and Who Do I Strive to Be? Applying a Theory of Self-Conscious Emotions to Medical Education Academic Medicine. 2018;93:874–880. doi: 10.1097/ACM.0000000000001970

⁴ Molloy E, Borrell-Carrió F, Epstein R. The impact of emotions in feedback. In: Boud D, Molloy E, editors. *Feedback in higher and professional education: Understanding it and doing it well*. London: Routledge; 2013. p. 50-71.

⁵ Bearman M, Molloy E. Intellectual streaking: the value of teachers exposing minds (and hearts). *Medical Teacher*. 2017;39(12):1284-1285.

⁶ Authors of second letter to editor (Med Ed journal to add details).

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