

# Just Don't Sit There

## OFFICE OF LEARNING RESOURCES

*By Dude Coudret, Ms.Ed (Assistant Director, Office of Learning Resources)*

Growing up, I remember my parents watching the Hour of Power on television. The show was hosted by internationally-known Christian Minister, Robert Schuller, founder of the Crystal Cathedral. To this day, I have never forgotten a message I overheard from one of his Sunday morning sermons. I can recall Schuller saying in his echoing voice, "Just don't sit there, do something!" This simple yet powerful phrase was encoded in my brain that morning, and it is still there today.

As a kid, when I first heard this phrase, I certainly wasn't thinking about its implications for learning and teaching. However, as I reflect on my education, current research, and my approach to college classroom instruction, I can see the relevancy in those six little words – just don't sit there, do something!

Your brain is just about 2% of your body weight, but it requires over 20% of your total nutritional (oxygen and glucose) intake. What may come as an even greater surprise is that during complex thinking, the type of thinking we want to happen in our classrooms, our brains require even more nutrition! The good news: just a few minutes of movement helps oxygenate the blood heading to our brains, which helps us engage in the learning and teaching at hand.

So as instructors, we need to ask ourselves if we provide students (and ourselves) with opportunities to move during classroom instruction. Here are three strategies that can be incorporated into almost any classroom experience.

- ⇒ Find a Partner and... Have students find a partner who is not sitting next to them. Ask these student pairs to find a space in the room to work on designated discussion questions or a task. Variations: Assign partners, spaces, or variations of tasks or questions. Example: Find a new partner and discuss the reading from pages 312-314. Be sure to identify at least two significant concepts and two questions that you and your partner have about this section.
- ⇒ Class Climate Ask the class a question and give 3-4 possible answers. Have students choose the answer that best fits their understanding or belief, then move to a designated spot in the room to join others who chose the same answer. Ask each group to discuss, then list reasons they chose this answer. Example: How many hours a week total should you be studying if you are taking 12 credit hours?
  - 3 hours, move to the front of the room
  - 6 hours, move to the back of the room
  - 12 hours, move to the left side of the room
  - 24 hours, move to the right side of the room

Group or Board Work Provide opportunities for students to form groups or to work on concepts/problems at the board. Even these short opportunities to move around can help increase engagement. Example: Form a group of five and then find a board to work on in the room. With your group, create a concept map or diagram of the key concepts that we just discussed in class. After 10 minutes of preparation, be prepared to present your concept map to the class. Each group member must contribute to the presentation.

Looking for more tips to engage your students? Be sure to check out the Learning and Teaching Tips Channel on Porches, where a new teaching tip or resource is shared each week. This channel can be found under the Faculty tab. Staff members in the Ryan C. Harris Learning Teaching Center's Office of Learning Resources (OLR) are also happy to consult with faculty and staff regarding a variety of topics related to learning and teaching. Most importantly, don't forget those six little words – Just don't sit there, do something! And remember, moving increases engagement and primes our brains to learn.