

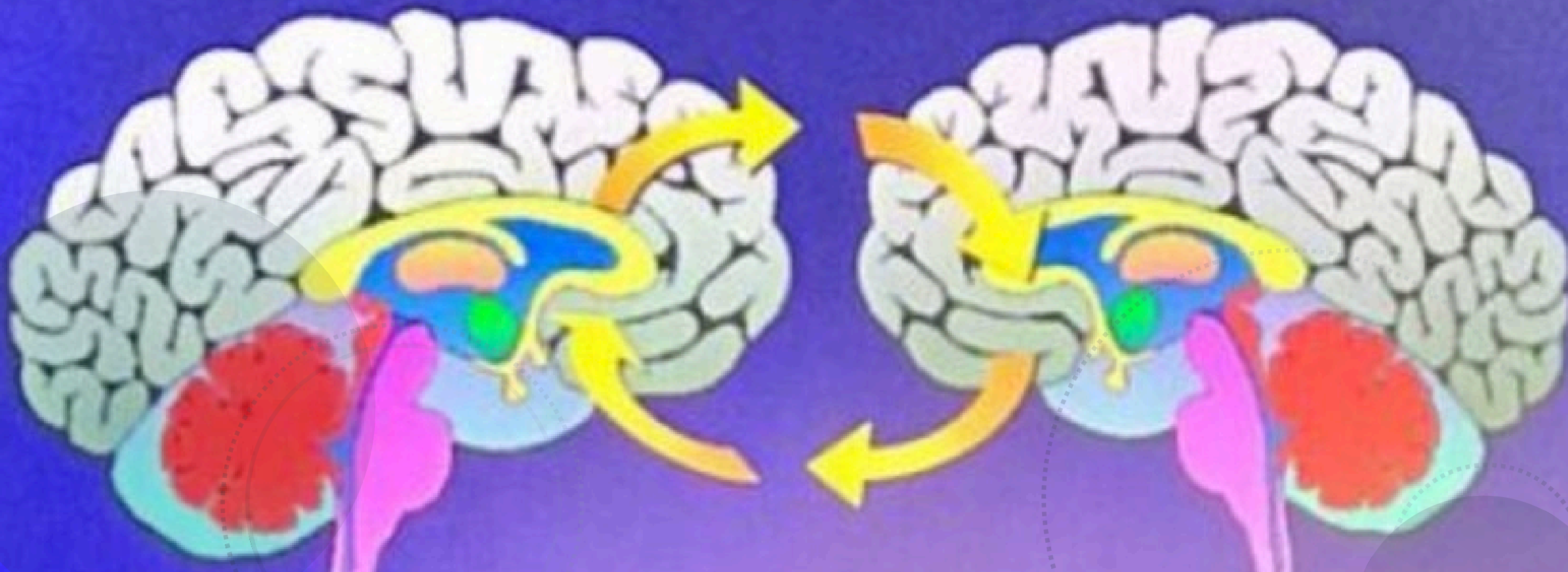


Faculty-Student Connections through *Stories of Self*

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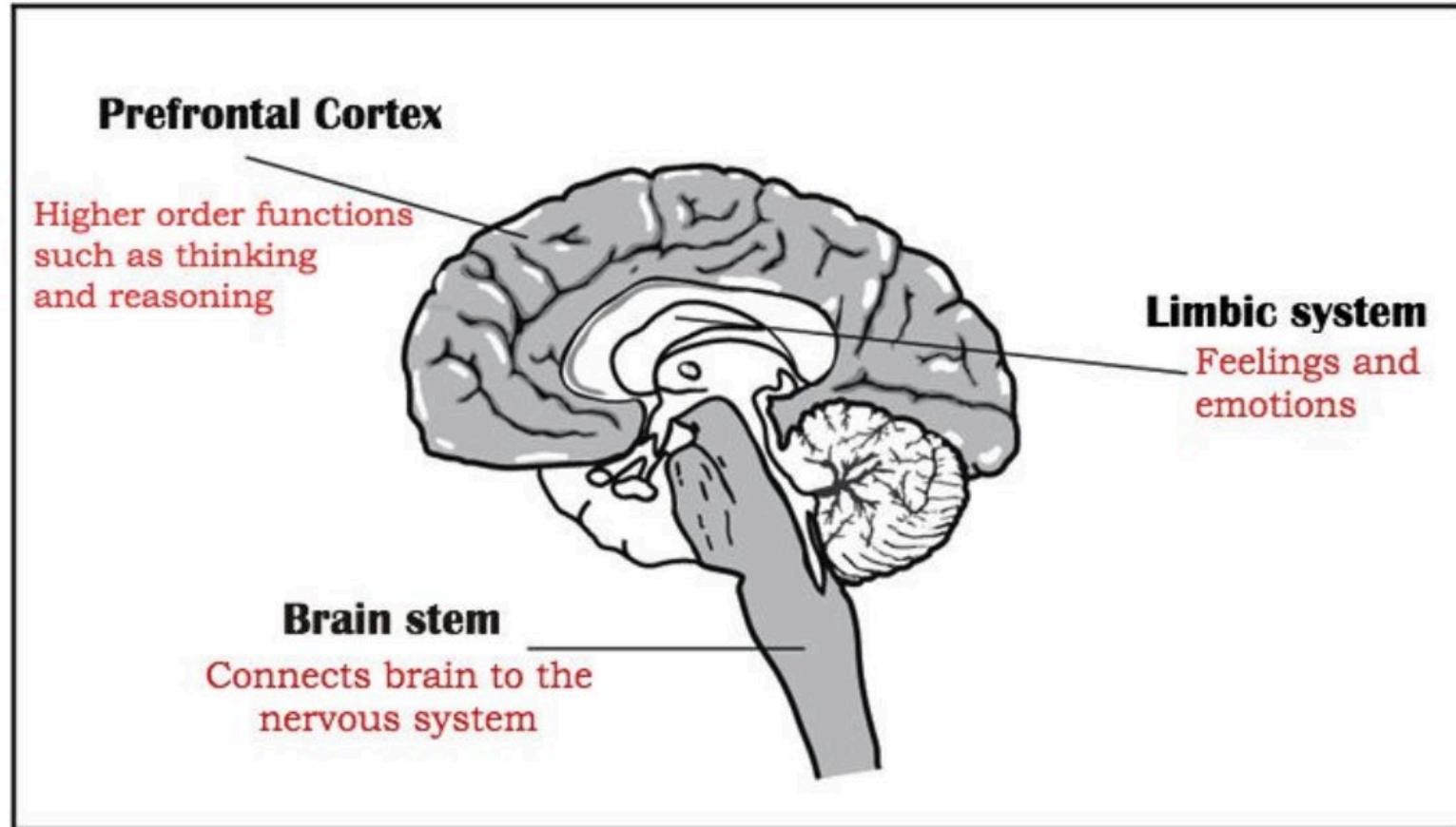
We're social beings and our brains are wired to connect with others.

Our best learning happens in the context of a trusting relationship.

We all, but particularly students of color, need to feel they are accepted, understood, and valued in an academic relationship and environment.

Relationships & the Brain

The limbic system needs to feel safe, calm, and connected for the prefrontal cortex to regulate thoughts, learning, and goal-directed actions.



Story of Self

- *How do faculty connect with students on the first day of class and throughout the semester?*
- *Is there a way that faculty can tell the story of their stories to connect with students?*

Story of Self

By telling a “*story of self*,” faculty can establish grounds for trust, understanding, relationship, and belonging.

The power in your “*story of self*” is to reveal something of those moments that were deeply meaningful to you in shaping your academic life—not your deepest private secrets, but the events that shaped your academic journey.

Learning to tell a good “*story of self*” demands the courage of introspection, and of sharing some of what you find.

MINORITY MALE MENTORING

M3 (Minority Male Mentoring) developed a series of poster stories written by men of color – faculty, students, and alumni. Their stories describe their ups and downs in higher education.

MINORITY MALE MENTORING



As a first-generation college student at UC Irvine, I was placed on academic probation. Not once, but twice. I tried to ignore it, but more than anything, I was ashamed. I never told my parents out of fear of disappointing them, especially my mom. They had so much pride in their son that I did not want to crush their expectations of me. After I found my way and figured out how to successfully navigate the system, I graduated and felt so relieved that I did not let my parents down. But that was not enough. My goal was to pursue a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology. The first and second time I applied, I was flat out rejected. Similar to undergrad, something inside me kept me going despite the obstacles and challenges. But I was never alone in this quest. The support and guidance from my family and mentors was instrumental to my perseverance. I earned a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from UCLA in 2013, which was something I could have never imagined while on academic probation. But I made it here, and I belong.

—Jonathan Martinez '13 Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Psychology, CSUN

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MINORITY MALE MENTORING



Growing up in the San Fernando Valley in the 1980s-90s as a young Black male challenged me to make a difference in not only my life—but in the lives of other men of color. Living with a single mother and an older brother, we moved often. Yet the one thing that was stable in my life was school. With my mother's strong faith in God, she always made way. I was the first person in my family to pursue higher education, so I attended four community colleges and worked two part-time jobs to fulfill my general education requirements in two years. I then transferred to UC Santa Barbara, double majoring in Psychology and Black Studies. I then earned a MSW degree from USC, later receiving my doctorate in clinical psychology. If it were not for my mentors — who were role models and believed in me — I would not be where I am today. I strongly believe in having visible representation of men of color in higher academic settings. I am passionate about providing psychological and emotional justice for men of color.

—Allen E. Lipscomb '15 Psy.D.

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Theme: Universality (I am not alone)

- “I’m not alone. We share similar life experiences.”
- “I honestly got goosebumps reading these stories due to past experiences of mine replaying in my head.”
- “I feel inspired because I too was on academic probation and I was even disqualified and now I’m back in my senior year.”
- Thanks to those men on the posters, I feel less alone and more motivated to continue on my path.”
- “Makes me feel like I belong too.”
- “I feel like i am not alone in my struggles because i know that i am not the only one facing such difficulties. Reading the posters gives me more motivation to continue pushing through in order to create my own story.”

Theme: Lessons learned

- “We all need someone to talk to that understands us and what we go through daily and what we’ve been through.”
- “I found them to be inspiring and a way to remember where I came from and what I’m ultimately trying to achieve to change the cycle of how my life is supposed to end up.”
- “The stories are really powerful as they all describe a story of overcoming life obstacles. Normally, one would use these obstacles as an excuse, but the stories on the posters are testaments that anything can be overcome. No matter the predicament one finds himself in.”
- “Very inspiring and motivating to actually take serious pride in school and ask for help in regard to taking advantage of the resources at CSUN.”

Theme: Inspired positive emotions

- “Felt determined and motivated to continue to work hard and excel as a first-generation college student.”
- “Makes me feel like I belong too. Encouraging, motivating, and relatable. I like hearing their downfalls and not just their accomplishments. Shows truth and speaks louder.”
- “I felt empowered, as if I should have written my own story to help others feel they belong. Feelings of hope.”
- “They are all very inspiring. Makes the struggles I’m going through look less intimidating. Others who have gone through their struggles have succeeded so there’s no reason why I can’t either.”
- “The experiences of those students are inspiring and send a strong vibe and connection.”
- “I feel a sense of a warm hug, it gives me inspiration. Me, as a male minority, I sometimes feel ill motivated, but oftentimes seeing and reading the stories of those powerful individuals makes me feel like I can make it too!”
- “These posters are essential for a person of color like myself. They serve as great reminders and inspiration. I often study late and walk past these posters which create confidence.”

Challenge, Choice, and Outcome

A plot begins with a **challenge** and a choice.

The **choice** yields an **outcome**, and the outcome teaches a lesson.

Because we can empathetically identify with the character, when we hear “about” someone’s courage; we are also inspired by it.

The story of a faculty member and their choices encourages students to think about their own values, and challenges, and inspires them with new ways of thinking about how to make choices in their own academic lives.

Crafting Your Own Story

Develop your own “story of self” by answering the following questions:

Challenge:

- *Why did you feel it was a challenge?*
- *What was so challenging about it?*
- *Why was it your challenge?*

Choice:

- *Why did you make the choice you did?*
- *Where did you get the courage (or not)? Where did you get the hope (or not)?*
- *Did your parents or grandparents’ life stories teach you in any way how to act in that moment? How did it feel?*

Outcome:

- *How did the outcome feel?*
- *Why did it feel that way?*
- *What did it teach you?*
- *What do you want to teach us?*
- *How do you want us to feel?*

*Please stay
connected*

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Question: What is truer than the truth?

Answer: The story.

Poster Storytelling Campaign

MINORITY
MALE
MENTORING



we be volcanoes. thai immigrants. family separation. san fernando valley. parents became strangers. birth name shame. colonized mind. lost culture. youngest of three boys. ma worked two jobs. pa was _____. cycle of violence continuation. survived by disassociation. university miseducation. new environment. same mindset. development arrested. mentor wanted. graduation postponed. back home. immigrant blues. lost decade. first college graduate. mentors' kindness. held on. redefined strong. opened palm. for the boy inside. for the boys and men of color. spirits connected. we be infinite.

- Pai Aromdee
MSW '20

MINORITY
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Complications during my 16-year-old mother's labor caused me to have a mild version of a diff-ability called Cerebral Palsy. "Diff-ability" is the preferred term in our community, since the prefix "dis-" in "disability" means "less than." It was tough growing up with a diff-ability and a confusing AfroLatino identity, so I overcompensated with academic success. I reached my goal of becoming a first-generation college student at the University of New Mexico, but without a mentor and hard-to-access counselors, I signed up for 300- and 400-level courses as a freshman — failing one and barely passing others. I dropped out, believing I was smart, but not college material. Two of my businesses failed, and I humbly returned to a community college. There, I met two African American female professors who offered invaluable mentorship. Now, weeks away from receiving a Social Work Master's from CSUN, and having been a mentor in the M3 program, I know mentorship is a key ingredient in my continued success.

- Mark Emeka
MSW '19

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An Indigenous, Queer person of color, my experiences with addiction, incarceration, homelessness and recovery further shaped my identity. Despite obstacles — including my learning disability and losing everything I owned in 2012 — I applied for aid from the Department of Rehabilitation and pursued higher education. Even with academic assistance, fear of inadequacy (or "Imposter Syndrome") loomed over my first day at CSUN. I could hear my grandfather, who disapproved of higher education, cursing me for becoming the "white devil." When someone assured me I belonged here, the fear dissipated, and my resilience and resolve strengthened. I earned a double BA in Deaf Studies and Linguistics in 2015, while homeless, and an MSW in 2017. Today, I am honored to mentor others, like I've been mentored — to help them realize they, too, are capable and deserving of an education. My mentors have been there the entire way and continue to push me to pursue a Ph.D.

- Erik Escareño
MSW '17

MINORITY
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I grew up without a father, and an older brother who went to prison for 10 years. My sister passed away from leukemia when I was 21. I was devastated to lose someone so close to me. To cope, I turned to drugs and alcohol. I dropped out of high school three units away from graduating on stage—but, with a strong support system, I persevered. I got my high school diploma, connected with my faith, achieved sobriety, and now help others as a substance abuse counselor. My mother, who went back to community college at 40, is my biggest role model. She inspired me to pursue higher education, where being able to learn saved my life. Knowing professors of color, like Dr. Allen Lipscomb, who share similar life experiences gives me the blueprint to reach my educational goals and leave a legacy for the next generation.

- Jeremiah Buenrostro
B.A., Psychology '18
MSW '20