

Notes on Being an Instructor

John Maeda, 2003

In the role of the instructor, due to your own conceit there is much damage that you can do to a student. At the same time, due to your own sense of charity, there are many possibilities that you can open for the student. In the former case, it is possible to do well by a student to show them how to prepare for the future in an explicitly formulated manner. However, in all cases you must consider the short-term future versus the long-term future. Students need to make their own mistakes on their own terms. Any hints you can give them quickly expire as they have left you. Independence cannot be taught.

Charity is an important quality for an instructor. You continue to give all that you can in terms of your at-that-moment insight, your future ideas, and opportunities that might be available to you that you share with your students. The new instructor quickly realizes the difficulty to this approach. That is a difficulty wrought of human ego. For instance, you might suggest to a stuck student a particular direction. He/she will grudgingly adopt the approach, and then sometimes succeed. Most likely, in a rush of passionate creation he/she has forgotten that it was you (the originator) that suggested the idea. Your ego is hurt; their ego is nurtured. And it can become even worse when the student later tries to impress you or claim creative equality to you by sometimes literally rubbing it into your face. My advice is to move on.

People who have ideas, continually have new ideas. You are better off letting go of your ideas as it means that you no longer have to do them anymore. You are living life in the most efficient manner.