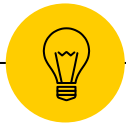


Gameful Training for **Competency Development** in Resident Assistants:



A Choose-Your-Own-Adventure online option

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BRACE YOURSELF

**RA TRAINING IS
COMING**

1

Literature Review: Quality practices in online environments

Because we can't make this stuff up



Experiential Learning and Students

- More than half of Americans believe they learn best by hands-on activities (Waggoner, Martin, Eads, & Branson, 2019), despite their preferred learning styles (Kolb, 1984)
- Gen Z students are multimodal and need active hands-on learning methods (Abrahams, 2015)
- Fun activities lead to increased engagement and participation (Diaz, 2009)



Experiential Learning in Online Environments

- Online activities should be more than a lecture and a test (Kiili, 2005, Erhel & Jamet, 2013)
- Digital games which follow both game design and flow experience provide fully immersed and engaged participation (Kiili, 2005)
- Reflection is critical to the learning process (Kolb, 1984), even in online environments (Kiili, 2005)



‘Choose Your Own Adventure’ Method

- Giving students ownership of their learning increases engagement and deepens learning
(Vygotsky, 1987)
- Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory tells us learning happens through active exploration
(Kolb, 1984)
- Choose Your Own Adventure (CYOA) satisfies both by combining storytelling with critical thinking and active exploration (Mundy & Consolli, 2013)



Modern RA challenges

Mental Health Concerns

- Increased usage of campus Counseling/ Psychological Services (Kitzrow, 2003; American Psychological Association, 2013)
- 24.5% of students were taking psychotropic medications with 21% having “severe” mental health issues (American Psychological Association, 2013)

Diverse Culture

- As higher education becomes more accessible, its students will be more diverse (U.S. Department of Education, 2016)
- Additional considerations are needed when working with diverse student populations (including LGBTQ+, Latin X, minoritized racial groups, students with differing abilities, etc) (U.S. Department of Education, 2016)

Rising Ethical Dilemmas

- Living and learning presents its own ethical challenges, especially with the extended use of technology; RAs tread a fine line between mentor/ friend and rule enforcer (Everett, D. D., & Loftus, Z. V., 2011)

2

Proposed Solutions/ Topics

Go big or go home, am I right?

Mental Health Concerns



Mental Health First Aid

What?

- RA should be aware of mental health issues facing college students and how to recognize them.
- Basic counseling training and resource knowledge

Why?

- Students enter college with higher rates of mental health issues/concerns than ever before.

Mental Health Concerns



Peer Mediation



What?

- A method of conflict management that allows hall staff to mitigate Conflicts within the residence halls
- Utilizes trained residence hall staff (RA, GCC, AC)

Why?

- Reduces the number of conduct cases and IRs each staff member will need to submit for further action
- Create community within the residence hall
- Restorative, not punitive



Social Justice/Advocating for Others



● What?

- Recognition/redistribution
- Micro/macro
- Knowledge/action

● Why?

- RAs work with diverse populations
- May not have experience/exposure to differences



Implicit Bias/Inclusive Language



● What?

- Implicit bias: stereotypes that are unconscious and/or beyond one's control

● Why?

- RAs make decisions on room disputes, conflict management, and conduct concerns
- They must recognize and work toward dismantling their implicit biases



Equitable Assessment

What?

- A method of assessment that Includes all voices (ses, gender ID, sexual orientation, etc)
- Includes multiple methods of students providing feedback

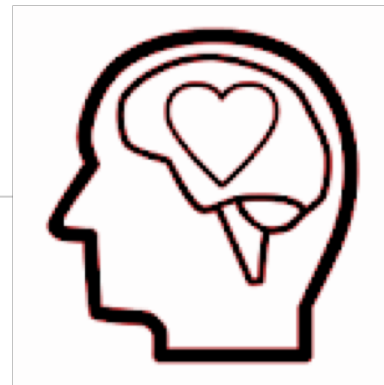
Why?

- Provides chance to engage and validate each student
- Provides data for data driven decisions





Emotional Intelligence



What?

- Emotional Intelligence: the ability to monitor one's own feelings in relation to others and use the information to guide thinking and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990)
- Skill sets include adaptability, intra/ interpersonal communication, and stress management

Why?

- RAs live and work with their peers; the ability to “hear” others’ feelings and perspectives is critical.



Community Engagement



What?

- A way to “better engage the community to achieve long-term and sustainable outcomes, processes, relationships, discourse, decision-making, or implementation.” (Pennsylvania State University, 2019)

Why?

- Affects student retention, success, experience
- Creates stronger community bonds to hall and university

Rising Ethical Dilemmas



Ethics & Liability



What?

- Train RA staff on professional ethics and university policy and law, as well as social media usage and concerns.

Why?

- RAs are viewed as friends, mentors, and rule enforcers for the students and university.
- Want to encourage a culture of ethics in RA staff.



Campus Resources /When to Refer



What?

- Being aware of all resources available to students
- Knowing what you are cable to assist with and who to point to when you aren't.

Why?

- We cannot expect RAs to know everything but they can at least always point students in the right direction

**I want to be a Resident
Assistant**



**So I can build a safe
and inclusive learning community**

3

Proposed format



Choose Your Own Adventure



- RAs choose which topic to explore (All topics must be explored, but they may choose the order)
- An interactive video will play, walking the RA through various scenarios, topics, and information.
- At certain points in the video, RAs will be able to choose which path they want to take.
- Each path has its own implications and further scenarios, just like a CYOA book
- Reflection at the end (written or verbal) is essential; additionally, topics could be further explored during staff meetings after activities have been completed



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Team Awesome: Dean Martin, Dean Paulk, Will Crandall, and Carrie Hachadurian

Resident Assistants (RAs) are among some of the most important undergraduate student employees of an institution (Jaeger & Caisson, 2006; Koch, 2016). RAs play many roles including first responder, counselor, friend, programmer, disciplinarian, tour guide, university representative, and more (Jaeger & Caisson, 2006; Thombs, Reingle Gonzalez, Osborn, Rossheim, & Suzuki, 2015; Koch, 2016). Current RA training material focuses on student safety and disciplinary action, confident decision-making skills, and counseling skills (Koch, 2016). However, the modern-day RA faces many more challenges than ever, with more and more students coming into college with financial instability, learning disabilities, personal identity crises, mental and emotional challenges, relationship problems, ethical considerations, and more (Jaeger & Caisson, 2006).

As college and university officials struggle to provide adequate RA training for the dynamically changing campus environments, they are also faced with budgetary and time constraints which often limit creativity and imagination (Jaeger & Caisson, 2006). Many institutions are turning to online learning environments to provide supplemental training opportunities to enhance in-person professional development of their RA (Thombs, et al., 2015). Based off research, our team presents 9 supplemental RA training topics using a creative and engaging approach to online environments using game design and flow experience.

Modern-Day RA Training Topics

There is a plethora of RA supplemental training topics institutions may wish to incorporate into their RA training sessions. In this section, we highlight relevant topics to today's modern RA training material:

Mental Health First Aid: According to the American Psychological Association (APA), the most common mental health concerns reported among college students in a 2013 survey of

counseling center directors were anxiety, depression, and relationship problem. 24.5 percent of students seen at college counseling centers were taking psychotropic medications (2013). 21 percent of students presented with severe mental health concerns, and an additional 40 percent presented with mild mental health concerns (American Psychological Association, 2013).

Resident Assistants will encounter students who deal with these problems and a myriad of others including eating disorders, substance abuse disorders, self-harming behaviors, and suicidal ideation (American Psychological Association, 2011). Because of the rise in mental health

Peer Mediation: Peer mediation is a method of students helping students to mediate concerns.

This practice has been utilized by courts, social services agencies, and now many universities have also adopted it as their method of first intervention. While utilizing this method does require an additional amount of training for residence hall staff, the return on investment is significant. Utilizing peer mediation reduces the number of cases that escalate and need to be referred for conduct, increases community, increases communication skills of students and residence hall staff, creates community, and provides skills that are useful for future careers and other life situations. Current effective models exist at universities such as NC State, Missouri State, Virginia State, University of Florida, among others.

Social Justice and Advocating for Others: Social justice and advocating for others is an area in which Resident Assistants should have at least a basic level of knowledge, as RAs work with diverse populations of students and may not have much experience working with individuals from different backgrounds and identities. According to King (2012), RAs who attended a training on social justice felt they were better prepared and more confident for their roles. Cook and McCoy (2017) strongly encourage RA trainings that provide information on social justice and inclusion, as these students will be working with diverse populations and may not have much knowledge of how to foster inclusion within their residence halls.

Implicit Bias and Inclusive Language: According to Project Implicit through Harvard, an implicit bias or stereotype is “one that is relatively inaccessible to conscious awareness and/or control” (“Frequently Asked Questions”, 2011). Holroyd (2012) states that while the biases are implicit or unconscious, an individual does bear responsibility when these biases affect decisions. RAs make many decisions regarding room disputes, conflict management, and conduct concerns, all of which can be impacted by bias. Therefore, it is important that RAs spend time learning about their own implicit biases through the Implicit Association Tests (IATs) through Project Implicit, or by enacting scenarios/case studies that may expose these biases.

Equitable Assessment (SSI/ Sky Factor/ NSSE) Equitable assessment practices have become a concern at most institutions. Moving our assessment culture to an equitable culture, requires that we begin with areas such as residential living where assessment is a normal part of daily culture. Assessment practices have historically been limiting for students defining them by single definitions such as gender identity, socioeconomic level, race, and others. Equitable assessment allows for students of all backgrounds to have their voice heard and be identified as who they, themselves, identify as. This change in assessment culture allows institutions to better understand student needs, desires, access, and perceptions in the multifaceted world that we live in. College is a time that students are beginning to struggle with and identify who they are and assessment should not limit or oppress that exploration and self-discovery.

Emotional Intelligence: Salovey and Mayer (1990) describe emotional intelligence as the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (p. 189). Those who have honed this skill are better able to “hear” the implications of

their own reasoning and understand the feelings of others in a variety of contexts (Jaeger & Caisson, 2013). Skill sets within emotional intelligence include adaptability, intrapersonal (internal relations), interpersonal (external relations), and stress management competencies (Jaeger & Caisson, 2013). Since RAs are student leaders who live and work among other students, development in this competency is critical (Jaeger & Caisson, 2013; Wu & Steimer, 2008).

Campus Resources and When to Refer: As we have seen during this training, Resident Assistants have a big responsibility to their students and their campus. While we do our best to train Resident Assistants to handle every situation, we know there will be some things not every RA is capable of handling. Because of this it is important that RAs are familiar with all recourses on campus available to students that are offered by the university. For example, knowing where the tutoring center is if a student is struggling academically or what counseling options the school offers to students who are struggling emotionally. While we do not expect RA to be able to do everything, we do want them to be prepared to point students in the right direction when they do not have the right answer.

Community Engagement Community engagement has been a driving force for increased retention during higher education. Many campuses now have centers for service learning and community engagement for this purpose. Community engagement creates students who are better equipped to be citizens who are socially engaged and prepared to make a better difference within their communities once they depart the university. The impact from community engagement has proven beneficial, so much so that more than 450 institutions signed onto the Campus Compacts pledge to increase community engagement at their universities in 2016 as part of Campus Compacts 30th anniversary. (Gruber, 2017)

Ethics and Liability: Resident Assistants in college are among the most influential people to college students. They often tread a fine line between peer friends/mentors and rule enforcers for their university (Everett, D. D., & Loftus, Z. V., 2011). They are often revered as role models to their students and are considered to be leaders on their respective campuses. Because of their influence, it is important that resident assistants are also equipped with sound moral and ethical character. It is important that Resident Assistants practice professional ethics and are also cognizant of university law, policy, and regulations. As employees of the institution, Resident Assistants must be knowledgeable of the rules they are asked to enforce so they can effectively do their jobs. Documents such as The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (F.E.R.P.A.) and Title IX should be taught to all Resident Assistants as well as explain their relevance and importance to higher education and the protection of their students. Additionally, ethics surrounding social media use within the workplace should also be explored.

Gameful Training and Online Environments

Although online learning modules give flexibility to its users, Erhel and Jamet (2013) caution such modules must be more than the standard lecture and test to be effective. In a survey conducted by Everest College, more than half of those surveyed believed they learned best by engaging in hands-on activities, as established by the Experiential Learning Theory (Waggoner, Martin, Eads, & Branson, 2019). Diaz (2009) encourages educators to incorporate entertainment with online learning environments to fully engage the participant, also known as “gameful training.” Kiili (2005) suggests using gaming design and flow experience to create engaging training opportunities. Flow experience requires concentration, challenging – but achievable – material, a connection to one’s skill set, and a playful and entertaining environment (Kiili, 2005). Reflection after the gaming experience, though, is critical, as expressed in the experiential learning cycle (Erhel & Jamet, 2013).

A 'Choose Your Own Adventure' (CYOA) style of gameful training in which the learner chooses paths to take within a session, is not new to the pedagogical world (Mundy & Consolli, 2013); however, it is worth exploring to connect this concept to online RA training. CYOA gives students ownership of their learning, a concept Vygotsky (1987) says deepens student learning and engagement. When students feel empowered to choose their own path to a given situation, they become more engaged throughout the process and motivated to finish the session (Mundy & Consolli, 2013). Additionally, CYOA encourages active exploration, an important tenant of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory. Reflection at the end of each experience to fully encapsulate the learning experience.

Page Break

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