

*Teaching Psychology in
Autobiography:*

*Perspectives from Exemplary
Psychology Teachers*

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Preface

A total of 72 outstanding teachers have contributed to the first two volumes of *Teaching Psychology in Autobiography: Perspectives from Exemplary Psychology Teachers*, published by the Society for the Teaching of Psychology. These stories represent the development and reflections of some of psychology's very best teachers who provide insightful anecdotes and lessons learned for anyone seeking to improve his or her teaching.

Volume 3 of *Teaching Psychology in Autobiography: Perspectives from Exemplary Psychology Teachers* extends the mission of the first two volumes by including 18 more invited autobiographies. In keeping with the ideals of the first volume, we invited recipients of all five of the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP) teaching excellence awards [Robert S. Daniel Teaching Excellence (Four-Year College or University) Award; Wayne Weiten Teaching Excellence (Two-Year College) Award; Mary Margaret Moffet Memorial Teaching Excellence (High School) Award; Jane S. Halonen Teaching Excellence (Early Career) Award; and the Wilbert J. McKeachie Teaching Excellence (Graduate Student) Award], all recipients of the American Psychological Foundation's Teaching Excellence Award (now called the Charles L. Brewer Distinguished Teaching of Psychology Award), past and present editors of *Teaching of Psychology*, and all past-presidents of STP to contribute chapters to this volume.

To provide consistency in both content and style across all chapters and volumes of this series, each contributor responded to the following 12 questions:

- What kind of preparation for teaching did you receive in your doctoral or master's program? If you had a course on teaching, please describe it.
- Did you have a teaching mentor or mentors? If so, please describe any unique characteristics of that relationship.
- If you did not have any formal training in teaching or teaching mentors, please describe how you "taught yourself" to become an effective teacher.
- What factors may have led to your decision to become a college and university level teacher?

- Have you faced any obstacles in your teaching? If so, how have you attempted to overcome these obstacles in your own teaching? Please describe any issues with which you continue to struggle and how you attempt to deal with them.
- Many academics see their work as a zero sum game—for example, time spent in the lab is time that necessarily cannot be spent working on teaching and so on. Have you felt that you have to sacrifice your research, service, or outreach efforts in order to become an effective teacher? Why or why not?
- What principles rest at the heart of your personal philosophy of teaching?
- In what interesting and significant ways has your approach to teaching changed over your academic career?
- What sorts of things do you find most rewarding from your teaching? What are the greatest frustrations and how do you try to overcome them?
- What methods and processes do you use to evaluate and reflect on upon your teaching? How has your view of the role of assessment of teaching changed over the course of your teaching career?
- In what efforts do you engage to continue to improve your teaching? How frequently do you engage in these efforts?
- If someone wants to become a good or even outstanding teacher, what would you advise him or her to do?

Each of the authors organized their answers to these questions under the following headings:

- My Early Development as a Teacher
- Working at Defining Myself as a Teacher
- The Examined Life of a Teacher
- Advice for New Teachers
- Final Thoughts

We thank all the authors who contributed to this volume for their wisdom and insight. Their cumulative years of experience can serve as a collective inspiration for new and veteran teachers alike. We also thank the STP leadership and Publications Committee; without their steadfast support this volume and other services like it would not exist. Finally, we would like to thank you, the reader, for taking the time to reflect on our common vocation as teachers of psychology.

As you read the chapters in this volume, we hope that you enjoy them as much as we have in preparing them for publication. In the pages to follow, you will find amusing anecdotes and quirky accidents alongside serious reflections and heartfelt recollections. Common across all the chapters is a driving passion for our discipline and an earnest desire to become a better teacher. And, at the heart of it all, exists a profound caring for our students; after all, it is for them that we have ventured along this path in the first place.

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