

Features

Dr. Cupillari

Inspirational Intelligence

by Missy Mace
Collegian Staff Writer

"She is an inspirational teacher who is encouraging to me", says math major Deanna Goodenow of Dr. Antonella



Cupillari, a math professor here at Behrend.

After receiving her doctorate degree in Italy and teaching math and physics in high school for a semester Dr. Cupillari entered the State University of New York. Even though she had her doctorate degree in Italy, she had to retake the exam once she entered the United States. It wasn't difficult because she was already prepared from her experience in Italy.

Dr. Cupillari came to this campus five years ago and found that she holds different views on teaching than some professors. Teaching to her is not just a lecture relating a lot of facts, but it is "convincing the students that this is important information to learn and it will be of essence later on in their lives."

What really bothers her about students in general is that sometimes students "are passive in class and you have to feed them the information you are presenting." After all, this is the easy way out, avoiding the pain of thinking. She feels her students should "participate in class and learn the thinking process in math, not just the numbers and the equations." She feels that the philosophy of math is very important. In fact, many of the great philosophers were mathematicians and physicists.

As a graduate student, Dr. Cupillari proved the unanswered problem of the existence of functions in complex variables. She developed this proof and used the functions to prove other complex variables. These proofs are combined in a book she has

established for undergraduate levels and can be found in the Behrend bookstore.

Most math books and math in general are dominated by men, but in Dr. Cupillari a woman has now taken a strong place. "She is a woman with a doctorate degree in math," states Deanna with a hopeful look in her eyes. "I feel that if she could do it, so can I." The few women who are math majors at Behrend look up to her, not only because she is a good math professor, but also because she is a female one.

"I am so grateful to have her as a teacher", Deanna says, "because she encourages me and she has the best class to approaching proofs I have ever seen." Dr. Cupillari sets a good example on this campus for those interested in a math major.

As a teacher she feels that her educational beginnings in Italy were a help to her career. In Italy once you decide your major you take classes in it, and only it, for four years. "There were no other basic requirements and you got a little sick of the classes," said Cupillari, with a slight smile, of her college major. She feels that she learned about as much as she could.

Dr. Cupillari admits that she gives a lot of homework assignments. Her philosophy is that she knows how to do the problems and it doesn't help her students to watch her prove that in class. "You can't fully learn by watching someone else do the problems, you have to practice them."

Along with her mathematical ability comes a lot of concern for her students. She cares that her students learn and absorb what she teaches. She takes an active part in communicating with her students to get them to participate in her class. As her student, Deanna states with a broad smile, "If I could say anything more about her it would have to be good because she is an all around great teacher."



Ask Louanne

The Collegian Advice Column
by Dr. Louanne Barton,
Psychologist

This week: A Friend Needs Help

Dear Louanne,

I feel a terrible responsibility. My friend has confided in me that she thinks about suicide a lot. She's been depressed most of the time. She's doing bad in school and broke up with her boyfriend after Christmas. She says I'm the only friend she has and she trusts me with things she won't tell anyone else. I don't know how to handle this and it's starting to get me down. I don't think she would do anything stupid, but I can't be with her all the time. Please tell me what to do.

Signed, Overwhelmed

I feel a terrible responsibility. My friend has confided in me that she thinks about suicide a lot.

Dear Overwhelmed,

You are right to take this seriously. I would confront your friend directly. Ask her if she has a plan for suicide, and if so, does she have the means to implement the plan. Has she stocked up on pills? (50 aspirin can be lethal and Tylenol can cause liver failure in 3 to 5 days). Does she abuse alcohol and drive a car? Has she, or other members of her family ever attempted suicide before? Does she regularly abuse alcohol or drugs. (Three fourths of all suicide attempts are under the influence of alcohol.)

Other signs of trouble are acting out antisocially, through cutting classes, sexual promiscuity, shoplifting, destruction of property, or verbal or physical aggression. Depression (hopelessness and apathy) that lasts more than a week, change in sleeping and eating habits,

suspiciousness, social isolation, and disoriented thinking are all signals that a person needs help. Academic failure and experiencing a recent loss can be precipitating factors.

This is one secret that shouldn't be kept. Your friend wouldn't have told you if she didn't want someone to stop her. Are there any others close to her that could help, such as parents, roommate, or R.A.? If so tell your friend that you are going to share this with them. Your friend may feel that you have violated a confidence, but will appreciate what you've done when her thinking is less confused.

Use your best listening skills. Show that you care. Don't evaluate, advise, moralize, or minimize her feelings by offering empty reassurances. Try to help her develop other

options and to understand that suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Help her keep busy by structuring her life, working up a schedule of daily activities. Encourage her to be with people.

Make sure she has Hotline numbers close by:

Erie Hot Line - 453-5656
Saint Vincent's Hospital - 452-5151
Hamot Hospital - 870-6136
Family Crisis - 456-2014

Most important, encourage her to get professional help. If necessary, accompany her to my office.

Last, but not least, take care of yourself. Remember that no matter how hard you try, you can not be responsible for another person's life. They have a choice.

Send letters to: Dr. Louanne Barton, Personal Counseling
213 Glenhill Farmhouse, Behrend College, Erie, Pa 16563

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