



## **SCOPE VISITING SCHOLAR PRACTICING PREVENTION TIP MARCH 2013**

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The month of March tends to be a very busy time for people in education. It's conference season, so people (or those with professional funding at least, another source of stress for those without it) may be headed to any number of events near and far from home. We tend to be involved in earnest with hiring or job searching at this time. People who live in places with intense winter weather might find that students, staff and faculty alike are especially impatient and cranky, and mental and physical health issues provoked or exacerbated by weather manifest strongly. Mid-term grades and other such obligations are piling on. Student behavior might be getting more, shall we say, lively. School and campus events and speakers are competing for space and attention. Departmental and staff dramas are flaring, and on college campuses the wellness programming calendar we first photocopied in the early 1990s mentions an assortment of stereotypical concerns to address such as the visual evidence of unintended pregnancies and Spring Break risks (really, those are on there!).

By now our New Year's resolutions are out the window or at least substantially revised. Not true for a few of our Facebook Friends, who have so generously posted earnest stories about their yoga and meditation, reasons for gratitude, photos of pants they are now too small, uh, er, "healthy" to wear, and other supremely irritating information that you feel guilty for resenting (insert winky smile face and link to kitten video so we can express the truth of our annoyance while having the deniability of humor). Maybe we had promised ourselves occasional nights out, time with loved ones and liked ones, more or less of something, or even a commitment to be nicer to ourselves as I suggested in last month's Tip. How's that going? Sufficiently guilty or ashamed, I trust?

As I write this article, I am on a plane headed to give some talks at an institution where I used to work. Many of us who leave one job to go to another may depart with relief—or even anger—rather than sentimentality and regret. I confess that in this case I had some of both dimensions, but more of the former when I left this one. I share this not to criticize the place or the people. On the contrary, I maintained a number of friendships and am really looking forward to the visit. The fact that I would later be invited and even paid to come back to speak would have been surprising to me all those years ago when I left. This is significant because for this month's Practicing Prevention Tip I have been thinking about how easily we come to believe something is or at least appears to be a certain way only to have that all change with time, circumstances, and/or perspective; and how we can enact more intention and agency in that process.

So, for instance, if you were nodding to yourself at the beginning of this article, consider this reframing:

The month of March tends to be a very exciting time for people in education. Many of us have opportunities to reconnect with colleagues and learn new and interesting ideas at conferences; or even through readings and webinars in the comfort of our home or office. Our last chance to play in snow comes along with the hopeful promise of spring; birds are returning and leaf buds are re-appearing on trees. Students are reminded by mid-term grades and assignments to recommit to their studies. The school or campus is alive with any number of fascinating and creative events. Students are bouncing off the walls, motivating staff to organize fun activities for all of us to do together. Theme weeks, months and

newly obtained informational resources give us all sorts of ideas for purposeful conversations with students and colleagues about diversity, wellbeing, safety and relationships. Friends from near and far are sharing stories through social media, email, phone calls, over coffee or meals that inspire us in endearing ways. As for me, I am on my way back to a special place where I learned a lot in general and about myself especially.

Winky smile face indeed! Now it's your turn...

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For more information about Dr. Laker and his role as Visiting Scholar with SCOPE, please visit <http://wearescope.org/resources/visiting-scholar/>.

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