

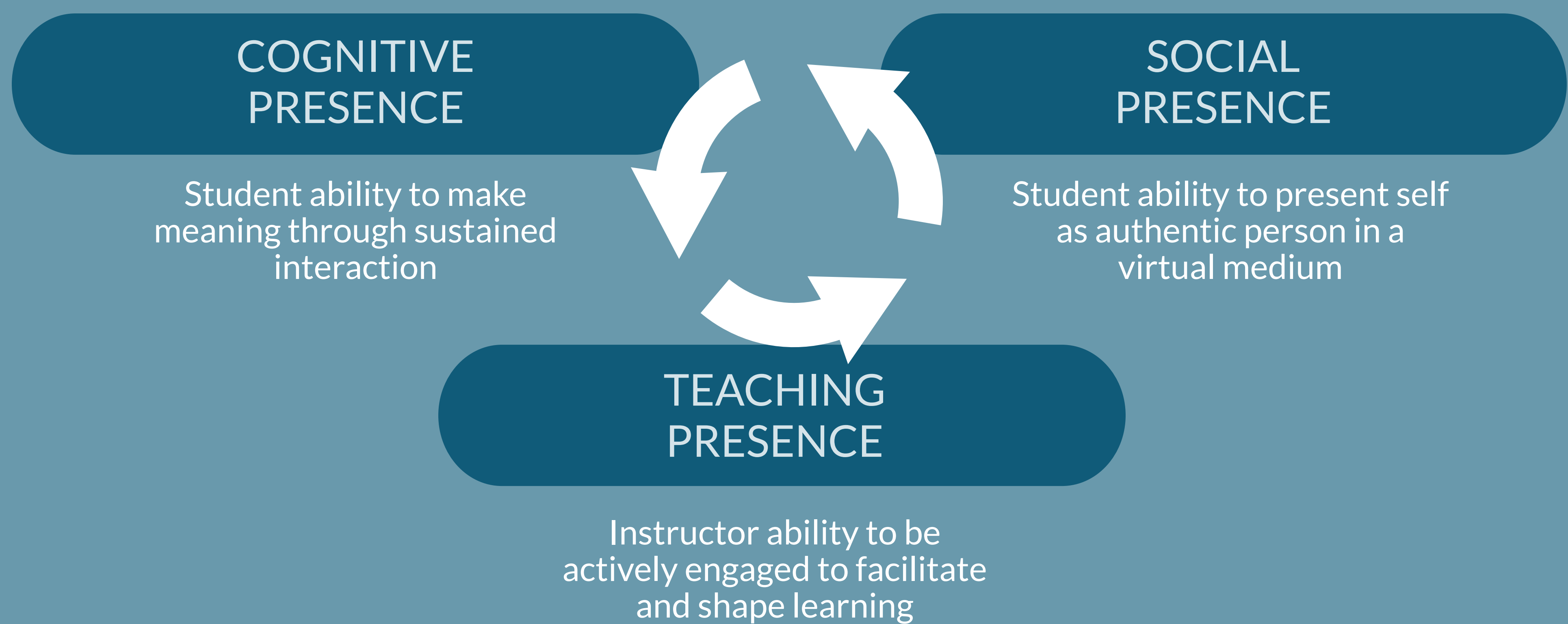
5 STRATEGIES TO BUILD A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

in an online learning environment

We know that building community in an online course is important, but how do you do it?

Research supports that building a sense of community in the online context contributes to learner feelings of belonging to a collective, minimizes isolation, and fosters academic achievement. Learning happens best through active and engaged participation with one another.

A Community of Inquiry Model guides effective online learning. These dimensions interact to contribute to a sense of community (Garrison, 2007).



Community of Inquiry Model

The following strategies have been found to be most conducive to the development of student sense of community (Shackelford & Maxwell, 2012).

1 HIGHLY INTERACTIVE INTRODUCTIONS

It is vital to begin your course with the opportunity for students to get to know one another, establishing connections, identifying commonalities, and appreciating differences.

Be creative! Examples include having students make and post introductory videos. Use ice breakers or discussion prompts with intention to learn about one another on a human level.

The intention is to humanize the learning environment.



2

SMALL GROUP COLLABORATIONS

Create opportunities for students to work together on assignments, activities and projects.

Provide structure with clear instructions and guidance on what you expect students to do.



Promotes teamwork and builds relationships.



Allows for mutual support.



Makes space to try new roles, discuss challenges, and develop trust.



3

PEER TEACHING



Have students make presentations from collaborative projects and other group work.

This provides students with control over their learning as well as leadership opportunities.

Students learn from each other and can connect their learning to the real world of nursing where we work as teams

4

ONLINE DISCUSSIONS

Whole class discussions may be synchronous or asynchronous. Small breakout groups may be used to engage more meaningfully, followed by a report out to the large group.



Instructor presence is key, not to control the discussion, but to continue community building through facilitating dialogue, answering questions and assisting students to mutually construct understanding of course content. Another key role is to foster inclusivity by inviting participation and making room for all voices to be respectfully heard.

5

SHARE RESOURCES WITH ONE ANOTHER

One of the most beneficial strategies to students is the opportunity to share learning resources with one another. When students build relationships with one another and are encouraged to share resources and ideas such as articles, websites, study skills and technology tips, this contributes to their success and sense of community.





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