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### Title

Ted Talks: Learning the Lasso Way.

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/70k532f0>

### Journal

Journal of Graduate Medical Education, 16(3)

### ISSN

1949-8349

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### Publication Date

2024-06-01

### DOI

10.4300/jgme-d-23-00735.1

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# Ted Talks: Learning the Lasso Way

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Medical educators have used excerpts from broadcast network medical dramas like *Grey's Anatomy*, *House*, and *Scrubs* to teach teamwork, professionalism, and ethics in the classroom.<sup>1-3</sup> However, these shows' medical content (and cringey inaccuracy) can divert learners' attention from the intended workplace lesson. In this Perspective, we share how educators looking for new ways to teach interpersonal competencies can turn to protagonists in nonmedical TV programs who have mastered those skills.

The abundance of nonmedical shows on modern streaming platforms presents new opportunities to bring cinemeducation,<sup>4</sup> the use of TV and film clips in medical education, from the classroom into the clinical learning environment. The Apple TV+ series *Ted Lasso* follows an American football coach who moves to England to manage the fictional Premier League soccer team AFC Richmond. While the show's namesake, Ted, knows little about soccer, his skills as a coach transcend the skepticism of the players and press who surround him.

Residents are in a parallel situation with Ted: they are developing domain knowledge while they are thrust into work environments where they must navigate challenging personalities, learn to work on and manage teams, and learn the practice of medicine. Clinician educators who prepare trainees for their new roles can capitalize on these parallels by using excerpts from the show that highlight the core tenants of what the show's reporter Trent Crimm calls the "Lasso Way."

## Be Curious, Not Judgmental

Ted repeatedly sees strengths in others that they cannot see in themselves. Upon arriving at Richmond, Ted engages Nate Shelley, the kitman (person in charge of equipment) who toils in anonymity. Ted uses Nate's name repeatedly, learns about his personal life and professional aspirations, and invites him to give an inspiring, though acerbic, pregame speech. Ted later surprises everyone when he promotes the kitman to assistant coach, where his winning strategies earn him the monicker "Wonder Kid."

Ted explains that while most people are quick to reach conclusions about others, he takes the opposite stance: "Be curious, not judgmental." Teachers can highlight Ted's instinct to ignore rank, role, and reputation, and instead get to know each person and discover their skills and aspirations.

## Be a Goldfish

In his first year with AFC Richmond, defender Sam Obisanya is decidedly outmaneuvered by his teammate Jamie Tartt during a scrimmage. Ted tells the dejected Sam that the happiest animal in the world is a goldfish because of its 10-second memory. Despite the scientific inaccuracy of this point—goldfish have durable memories<sup>5</sup>—Ted encourages Sam to "be a goldfish" by letting his mistake go and moving on to the next play. In the following week's game, Sam delivers a standout defensive performance. Ted's goldfish message can be shared with novice clinicians who, like novice players, must learn that mistakes are inevitable in a complex system and that we must learn from them—but not let them define us.

## Diamond Dogs

Ted is a happy-go-lucky leader, but privately he suffers from the dissolution of his marriage, separation from his son, and his father's suicide. After a hasty exit to conceal a panic attack during a televised quarterfinal game, Ted discloses his struggles with his inner circle, the Diamond Dogs. This 4-man group is periodically summoned with a communal "woof" to sort out workplace conflicts and relationship dilemmas. The scene in which Ted discloses his panic attack in a Diamond Dogs huddle—followed by Higgins disclosing his ineptitude with time zones, Roy his disdain for scouting reports, and Beard his inadvertent psychedelic ingestion—demonstrates the value of a supportive inner circle where role-modeling vulnerability is just as important as projecting competency. When Ted's panic attack is later leaked to the media, it is the support of the Diamond Dogs that allows Ted to discuss his truth openly with his players and the press—a brave turn from the way mental health is usually handled in athletics.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-23-00735.1>

## Woman Up

When Jamie comes to Ted for advice about his raucous conflict with teammate Roy Kent, Ted tells Jamie they need to “woman up.” Jamie responds, “I think you mean ‘man up.’” Ted corrects him, “No, y’all have been manning up for a while. Look where that’s got you.” This moment amplifies the working and leadership styles of the women on the show who deftly blend relentless pursuit of objectives with relationship-based actions. Dr. Sharon Fieldstone, a sports psychologist, is brought in to help striker Dani Rojas after an unfortunate incident involving a dog and a penalty kick. She has no hesitation owning her talent—telling a skeptical Ted, “As good as you are at your job, I’m twice as good as mine”—while also expertly letting silence linger in conversation, encouraging players to share the information she needs to succeed in her job. AFC Richmond owner Rebecca Welton singlehandedly dismantles a plan being hatched by a council of male club owners for an exclusionary soccer league of elite teams. She commands the room by directly calling out their greed while simultaneously appealing to their forgotten love of a game that they are on the brink of excluding fans from. Teachers can use these examples to emphasize the value of diversity of leadership and conflict management styles in the workplace.

## Teaching With TV

We use Lasso excerpts (TABLE) in real time by queuing up bookmarked YouTube clips on our phones or computers when a workplace lesson arises (eg, how curiosity rather than judgement underscores effective motivational interviewing). G.D. uses the bar scene in which Ted utters his “be curious, not judgmental” philosophy in didactics to emphasize the value of this mindset in resolving workplace conflict. I.K. recounted the “be a goldfish” exchange when debriefing with a resident who made a technical mistake during a procedure. Referencing the on-screen lesson helped the resident—a Lasso fan himself—shift his focus from regret toward improvement, which he demonstrated on the next attempt. I.K. uses the “woman up” phrase to jar learners out of default ways of approaching conflict and negotiation and makes a pitch to watch Rebecca’s boardroom showdown to highlight the point.

A systematic review by Hoffman et al evaluating outcomes of curricular television exposure demonstrated increased learner knowledge of presented health topics.<sup>3</sup> In their narrative review of TV and movie pedagogical applications in medical education, Law et al found that videos trigger emotions that prompt trainees to explore moral and interpersonal issues that are integral to medical practice but difficult to convey through didactic content.<sup>6</sup> Cinemeducation

TABLE

*Ted Lasso* Clips

Clip Name	Season, Episode, Timestamp on Apple TV+	Description
Be curious, not judgmental	Season 1, Episode 8: “The Diamond Dogs,” 24:04-25:49	Soccer club owner Rupert Mannion underestimates Ted’s abilities in a high stakes game of darts, illustrating the error of prejudging others.
Be a goldfish	Season 1, Episode 2: “Biscuits,” 4:48-5:40	Ted tells Sam to learn from his mistake and not let it define him.
Diamond Dogs	Season 2, Episode 8: “Man City,” 30:10-32:10	Ted discloses his mental health concerns with his inner circle, the “Diamond Dogs,” prompting each member of the group to share their own struggles.
Woman up	Season 3, Episode 10: “International Break,” 44:54-48:55	Rebecca addresses male soccer club owners about their greed and forgotten passion for the game; her presence and skillful speech demonstrates the value of diversity in leadership and conflict management.
You’re just 1 of 11 <sup>a</sup>	Season 1, Episode 2: “Biscuits,” 23:11-24:30	To highlight that there is no “I in TEAM,” Ted tells egotistical star striker Jamie Tartt: “I think that you might be so sure that you’re one in a million, that sometimes you forget that out there, you’re just 1 of 11. And if you just figure out some way to turn that ‘me’ into ‘us,’ the sky’s the limit for you.”

<sup>a</sup> Bonus clip, not described in article.

allows learners to transport themselves into a storyline and emulate desirable on-screen behavior.<sup>7</sup>

However, TV and movie clips may not always have the intended effect. Teachers may overlook their familiarity with a storyline when anticipating the educational value of a scene. If a learner has never watched the show, the lesson from a particular plot arc or character evolution may be missed. Learners may not see themselves represented in the characters or circumstances of the show, inferring that it does not apply to them. Teachers should provide context and character stories before sharing scenes rather than assuming everyone has the same cultural touchpoints.

Teachers can emphasize that everything does not go perfectly in Ted's world. While his faith in Nate led to his promotion, Ted fell short of his expectations as a mentor, leading Nate to defect to a rival team and belittle his former teammates. While Ted demonstrates an enviable capacity to move on after professional losses, he falls short at being a goldfish in his own personal life. This balanced portrayal allows learners to recognize that Ted is a regular human who is asked to do a superhuman task.

Trainees navigating the clinical environment can learn from Ted, who is both a student and a leader. He knows little about his job and yet succeeds because he knows so much about people. He is steadfast in valuing personal development over winning, standing by players when they need it most, and elevating everyone around him. Trainees benefit from guidance as they transition from being novices to leaders in the clinical environment. To help them find their way, teachers can inspire them with the Lasso Way.

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