



When Mindfulness Meets the Classroom

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**“As teachers, we guide and support our students to become independent thinkers. We must teach the whole person, with an intention to go beyond the mere transfer of facts and theories”
(Barbezat & Bush 2014)**

**“It is the one who does the work who does the learning.”
- Terry Doyle, The New Science of Learning**

What is Mindfulness?

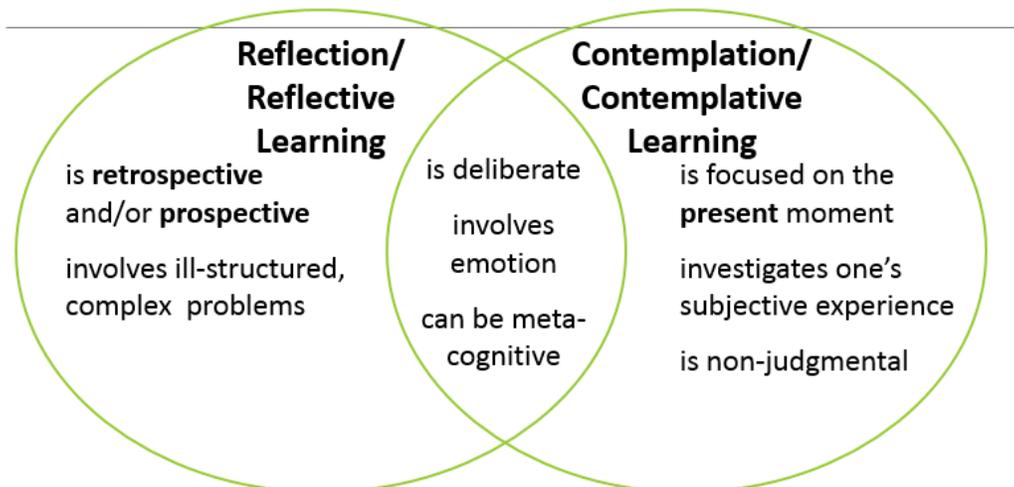
Mindfulness is a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations.

Where is this in Higher Ed?

“Opening the contemplative mind in schools is not a religious issue... Inviting contemplative study simply includes the natural human capacity for knowing through silence, pondering deeply, beholding, witnessing the contents of consciousness and so forth.” (Hart, 2004)

“Contemplation is. . . not the emptying of the mind of thoughts but the cultivation of awareness of thoughts within the mind.” (Barbezat & Bush, 2014)

Reflective Learning vs. Contemplative Learning



(Barbezat & Bush, 2014; Moon, 2004)

Practical Strategies

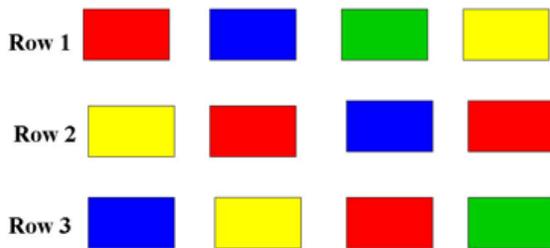
Mindfulness & Attention

Stroop Interference Test

- The words themselves have a strong influence over your ability to say the color. The interference between the different information (what the words say and the color of the words) your brain receives causes a problem. There are two theories that may explain the Stroop effect:
 - Speed of Processing Theory: the interference occurs because words are read faster than colors are named.
 - Selective Attention Theory: the interference occurs because naming colors requires more attention than reading words.

Demonstration: Stroop Test

State the colors as fast as you can



Again, state the colors as fast as you can

Row 1 **Red** **Blue** **Green** **Yellow**

Row 2 **Yellow** **Green** **Blue** **Red**

Row 3 **Green** **Red** **Yellow** **Blue**

From John Gosbee, MD, MS, VA National Center for Patient Safety

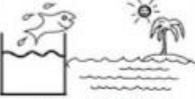
Table 2. Components Proposed to Describe the Mechanisms Through Which Mindfulness Works

Mechanism	Exemplary instructions	Self-reported and experimental behavioral findings	Associated brain areas
1. Attention regulation	Sustaining attention on the chosen object; whenever distracted, returning attention to the object	Enhanced performance: executive attention (Attention Network Test and Stroop interference), orienting, alerting, diminished attentional blink effect	Anterior cingulate cortex
2. Body awareness	Focus is usually an object of internal experience: sensory experiences of breathing, emotions, or other body sensations	Increased scores on the Observe subscale of the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire; narrative self-reports of enhanced body awareness	Insula, temporo-parietal junction
3.1 Emotion regulation: reappraisal	Approaching ongoing emotional reactions in a different way (nonjudgmentally, with acceptance)	Increases in positive reappraisal (Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire)	(Dorsal) prefrontal cortex (PFC)
3.2 Emotion regulation: exposure, extinction, and reconsolidation	Exposing oneself to whatever is present in the field of awareness; letting oneself be affected by it; refraining from internal reactivity	Increases in nonreactivity to inner experiences (Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire)	Ventro-medial PFC, hippocampus, amygdala
4. Change in perspective on the self	Detachment from identification with a static sense of self	Self-reported changes in self-concept (Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, Temperament and Character Inventory)	Medial PFC, posterior cingulate cortex, insula, temporo-parietal junction

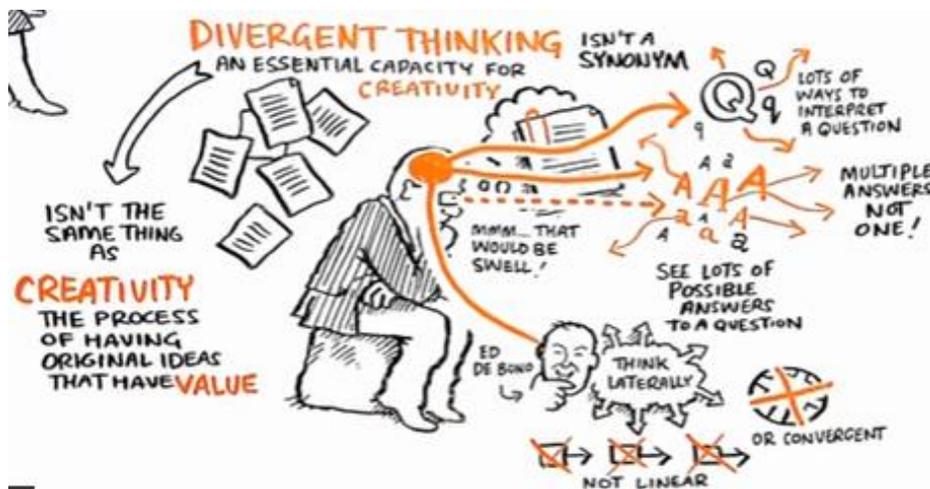
Mindfulness & Creativity

Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (alternate uses task)

- Fluency – number of responses
- Originality – comparison across subjects
- Flexibility – number of categories
- Elaboration – detail

Torrance Test	Starting Shapes	Completed Drawing	
		More Creative	Less Creative
<p>In a standardized Torrance Test of Creative Thinking, subjects are given simple shapes (left column) and are asked to use them (top row) or combine them (middle row) in a picture or to complete a partial picture (bottom row). Evaluators judge whether the results are more or less creative.</p>	Use	 Mickey Mouse	 Chain
	Combine	 King	 Face
	Complete	 A fish on vacation	 Pot

Studio 360 Podcast: <http://www.wnyc.org/story/287917-how-creative-are-you/>



Creativity Findings

- "Open-monitoring" meditators show significantly greater originality, fluency and flexibility
- "Open-monitoring" meditation associated with positive affect, which in turn is associated with holistic thinking

What does it look like in class?

How to implement a guided mindful practice in the classroom:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qywQJSboliw>

Mindfulness Awareness Practice – 5 Mindful Minutes

- Quiet and intentional (phones of silent/no-vibrate)
- Relaxed, good posture (“lifted from crown of the head”)
- Eyes closed to the extent that you are comfortable
- Focus on body relaxation, breath sensation (“count”)
- Acceptance of distraction as it occurs (“thinking”)
- Re-focus on relaxation, breath-sensation
- Re-focus on relaxation, breath-sensation (reps)

Deep Engagement - Practice

Contemplative Reading (lectio divina)

Increasingly deep “dialogue” with a reading

Current-moment awareness of its features and their effects on the reader

Contemplative Writing

Freewriting without stopping

When you pause and don’t want to write something, that’s the sign it’s potent and must be written.

Guidelines for Contemplative Activities

- Plan a structured exercise but be flexible.
- Allow students their own experience.
- Have a clear pedagogical purpose and communicate that so students understand how it fits into the course.
- Allow students to opt out during any exercise so they feel safe
- Consider allowing students time after an exercise to reflect/write.



**THINK
PAIR
SHARE**



How could you incorporate mindful practices in your classroom?
