
JOURNAL FOR THE
LIBERAL ARTS
AND
SCIENCES
VOLUME 22, ISSUE 1

- 
- 2 Editor's Notes
- 6 *Lessons Learned from Implementing a Mindfulness-based, Stress-Reduction Program in a Liberal Arts College*
Penelope Wong
Berea College
- 27 *Loving-Kindness, Community-Building, Deep Listening: A Case for Contemplative Department Chair Leadership*
Paula Selvester
California State University, Chico
- 42 *Finding Center: Towards Increasing Clarity and Reducing Anxiety in Statistics Class*
Lawrence M. Lesser
The University of Texas at El Paso
- 59 *"We are human": Using Contemplative Practice in a Black Studies Class after Philando Castile*
Maria Hamilton Abegunde
Chare' A. Smith
Ryan Lucas
Moniel Sanders
Indiana University-Bloomington
- 75 *Where do I Begin in Learning More /About Mindfulness? A Resource Guide for those in Higher Education*
Penelope Wong
Berea College

EDITOR'S NOTES

The Journal of Liberal Arts and Sciences (JLAS) is pleased to have Dr. Penelope Wong, Associate Professor of Education Studies at Berea College, as our guest editor for this special issue focusing on mindfulness/mindfulness-based, stress reduction practices (MBSR) in higher education. A teacher educator, Dr. Wong's areas of scholarly interest are far ranging. She reads, writes, and maintains research interest in diversity in education, curriculum and pedagogy, mindfulness/MBSR in K-16 education and a number of other fields. Her personal and professional mission in life is to bring mindfulness/MBSR practices to as many people and places as possible.

Randy Mills, Editor
Journal for the Liberal Arts and Sciences

It is with great pleasure that I am able to serve as a guest editor for this special theme issue –“Mindfulness and Higher Education.” This fall 2017 edition of the *Journal for the Liberal Arts and Sciences* offers four very diverse articles on the practice of mindfulness in higher education and one resource guide. I am appreciative of this opportunity to have worked with authors who contributed the articles on this topic and to be able to share them with the larger *JLAS* readership.

Mindfulness in higher education is a phenomenon that has existed for some time. Twenty years ago, faculty in higher education were exploring the benefits of mindfulness in various academic disciplines (Center for the Contemplative Mind in Society, 2017). However, in 2010, the Center for the Contemplative Mind in Society decided to devote its efforts on mindfulness to post-secondary education. Since that time, mindfulness, has gained wide attention and popularity not only in post-secondary institutions but also in the K-12 educational sector and the general public as well.

So what is mindfulness? In general, mindfulness is using a set of meditation, breathing, or mind-body skills in order to

regulate emotions and stress effectively. Kabat-Zinn, one of the pioneers of mindfulness training, defines mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally” (1994, p. 4). Given this goal, Kabat-Zinn developed a very successful mindfulness training program, called Mindfulness-based, Stress-Reduction (MBSR) which has helped thousands of individuals, particularly those experiencing chronic physical pain due to terminal illnesses, find relief. Kabat-Zinn’s eight week MBSR course takes individuals through a variety of emotional and somatic activities, such as focused breathing exercises, body scans, and walking meditations. This course has been the foundation upon which other mindfulness training programs have been created. Counseling centers and other academic and non-academic departments in many colleges and universities have found MBSR programs to be helpful in assisting college students with managing their stress. While these programs are not “cures” or “solutions” for the emotional or psychological issues that students might be experiencing, they are one way to help introduce students to the benefits of mindfulness. As the articles in this volume demonstrate, a program is certainly not the only way to expose students to MBSR. It can be incorporated in a number of venues, such as an individual class. Indeed, the sheer scope and variety of the ways MBSR can be implemented in a post-secondary context is intriguing and presents an opportunity to research some of the benefits and challenges of the various delivery systems.

The first article in this series, “Lessons Learned from Implementing a Mindfulness-based, Stress-Reduction Program in a Liberal Arts College” is my own and provides a Google-earth or 35,000 meter view of implementing a MBSR program. Using a chronological framework of before, during and after implementation, this article discusses the major considerations, highlights, and challenges of instituting a campus-wide MBSR program at a small, liberal-arts college. Though the context of a small liberal-arts college presents very different opportunities and challenges compared to a large comprehensive university, for example, there are still universals that cut across a variety of post-secondary institutions, such as the need to garner broad

support across a variety of campus constituents when implementing a new initiative.

The second article, “Loving-Kindness, Community-Building, Deep Listening: A Case for Contemplative Department Chair Leadership” by Dr. Paula Selvester brings the level of examination of mindfulness down to the departmental administrative level. In this thoughtful article, Dr. Selvester argues how a department chair, who is often caught between the proverbial “rock and hard place” of meeting the needs and wishes of faculty and deans, can benefit from mindfulness skills. The benefits not only serve the department chair’s emotional and mental health but also can benefit entire academic departments. Significantly, Dr. Selvester illustrates how mindfulness resonates with current transformational leadership models, thereby providing an inroad for mindfulness to be integrated into future mainstream administrative models.

The third article, “Finding Center: Towards Increasing Clarity and Reducing Anxiety in Statistics Class” by Dr. Lawrence Lesser, brings us to the level of the individual classroom. In this intriguing article, Dr. Lesser directly challenges the sometimes erroneously held view that mindfulness can only be effectively implemented in certain disciplinary classes, such as religion or humanities classes versus math and science classes. Dr. Lesser chronicles how he not only incorporated mindfulness successfully into an introductory statistics course but also made direct connections between mindfulness principles and statistical concepts.

The fourth article, “‘We are human’: Using Contemplative Practice in a Black Studies Class after Philando Castile” by Dr. Maria Hamilton Abegunde and students Chare’ A. Smith, Ryan Lucas and Moniel Sanders delves even more deeply into a classroom setting and focuses on a very specific mindfulness/contemplative activity, *Lectio Divinia* (Divine Reading). In a beautifully rendered testimony, Dr. Abegunde and her students demonstrate the power of a contemplative practice to not only relieve stress and anxiety but also work towards emotional healing. Most impacting are the voices of students who can be silenced or sometimes forgotten when discussing academic matters.

The fifth and final installment in this series, “Where do I Begin in Learning More About Mindfulness? A Resource Guide for those in Higher Education” is exactly as the title illustrates: a resource guide. The articles in this series provided a glimpse of the tremendous breadth and scope of the work being done on mindfulness in higher education. The variety of contexts (i.e., small colleges to comprehensive universities), geographical locations (Kentucky, California, Indiana and Texas), the variety of individuals impacted (administration, faculty and students), and level of implementation (programmatic at a campus level to individual mindfulness practices) suggests that the resources informing mindfulness practitioners should also be as diverse. Thus, in the final installment, one will find a diverse selection of resources both in type (e.g., mainstream magazines and academic journals) and format (e.g., paper and electronic).

It has been my pleasure and privilege to work with each of the contributing authors and Randy Ellis, the general editor of JLAS. My sincere hope is that members of the JLAS readership will initiate or deepen an aspect of their involvement with mindfulness/MBSR as a result of reading the inspiring articles of this special issue.

Penelope Wong, Guest Editor
Associate Professor, Education Studies
Berea College

Lessons Learned from Implementing a Mindfulness-based, Stress-Reduction (MBSR) Program in a Liberal Arts College

Penelope Wong
Berea College

Abstract

Stress and anxiety is a top complaint among the emerging adult/college-age population. One response of many post-secondary institutions is to institute mindfulness-based, stress reduction programs to assist students in proactively addressing their stress and anxiety. This article chronicles the first-year implementation of a MBSR program at a small, private, liberal arts college. Strategies are discussed with respect to preparing, introducing, implementing and sustaining a campus-wide MBSR program in one college. The challenges and highlights from the pre-implementation phase, the first year of implementation and second year of implementation are discussed.

Introduction

Stress and anxiety is one of the most common if not the most common complaint by emerging adults on college/university campuses today, and its potentially negative psychological, physical and emotional effects are well documented (American College Health Survey, 2009; Arnett, 2012; Bland, Melton, Welle and Bigham, 2012; Hicks and Heastie, 2008; Peer, Hillman and VanHoest, 2015). Fortunately, there is a growing body of research touting the benefits of mindfulness-based, stress reduction (MBSR) programs to mitigate and possibly counter the stress and anxiety that students encounter (Bergen-Cico, Possemato, and Cheon, 2013; Deckro et. al, 2002; Rogers, 2016).

This case study will chronicle one small liberal arts college's response to assisting students in addressing and managing their anxiety and stress by examining both institutional and individual

student data, instructor comments and observations as well as key lessons learned from launching and sustaining a MBSR program.

Background and Context

The site for this case study is a small, liberal arts college located in the southern region of the United States. The student population is about 1600 students and is mainly white/Caucasian (64.5 %); the second largest non-white group is African American (16.5%). The Hispanic/Latino population is 8%, the international student population and “other” is 7.8%, the Asian population is 1.6%, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander is 1.9%, and American Indian or Alaskan native is 0.8%. These figures do not quite add up to 100% because students might have indicated two categories for being bi or multi-racial, and some students did not disclose their race. The vast majority of students are traditional (e.g., single and between 18-21 years of age); there is a sizeable non-traditional population 22 -29 years (16%) and thirty years or older (3%). There are more females (56%) than males (44 %).

Campus surveys report that anxiety and stress are the top reasons for non-wellness among the student population (Berea College, 2017). A 2017 survey (n=474) found that after financial stressors, academics was the second significant source of stress across all demographic variables (e.g., gender and ethnicity). These were not entirely surprising results. In fact, before this survey had been administered, the college had hired an additional counselor and counseling intern for the Counseling Services Department. This personnel decision along with increased programming across campus to address stress and anxiety were some of the first responses to this issue. Even before the more recent surveys concerning the impact of stress and anxiety on students, College leadership was already concerned about the overall health of its students. In 2013, as part of a transformative educational process, the College launched a significant health initiative, *THRIVE! Being and Becoming the Best Possible You*. THRIVE takes a holistic approach to health and includes financial, spiritual, and occupational health along with the traditional measures of health – physical, intellectual, emotional and social. It involves

participation of faculty, staff, administrators and students. Though launched in 2013, several years of preparation and groundwork were involved beforehand. THRIVE was selected through a faculty and staff vote and constituted the Quality Enhancement Plan that fulfilled a SACSCOC reaffirmation commitment. Since the launch of THRIVE, more targeted wellness initiatives, such as *FRESH (First-year Residential Experience Supporting Health) Start: Learning to Thrive!* aimed at incoming students, have been launched. Many other structures were invoked to support these programs, such as the creation of a Director of Health and Wellness position and integration of *THRIVE* elements into required health and wellness courses that all students must take. The broad and wide-ranging reach of these wellness initiatives involving academic departments, the Labor and Student Life Program, Residential Life Collegium, Counseling Services, College administration, Academic Services and other entities, speak to the attempt to infuse these programs in all aspects of campus culture. As will be discussed subsequently, there was an attempt to have MBSR be a part of these campus departments in programs. We learned that a successful launch of a MBSR program takes time (at least a year) and is more likely to succeed if situated in various existing structures of the institution and can be linked to larger campus initiatives. In short, if an MBSR program can be launched in the context of a culture of wellness on campus, it is more likely to be well received.

Preparation for Implementing a Campus-wide MBSR Program

In the spring of 2016, the College began to explore various MBSR programs. In January of 2016, the College funded seven faculty and staff to attend an eight-week MBSR course based on John Kabat-Zinn's original MBSR program. Also during this term, a certified trainer of another MBSR program, Koru, came to campus weekly to pilot a version of this four-week course to students, faculty and staff. Koru, is a research-based MBSR program developed specifically for emerging adults, the college-aged population (Rogers and Maytan, 2012). Koru was created in 2005 by two psychiatrists. Since that time, they have experimented and offered hundreds of classes to mainly Duke

University students and revised and refined aspects of the course until finding a delivery system that seemed to work most effectively with emerging adults or college students. The program requires a modest time commitment of four weekly seventy-five minute, class sessions. A suggested minimum of 10 daily minutes of mindfulness practice along with light minimal reading (one short book) and a short reflection log that should be filled out daily is all that is required in a course. Students also fill out a post-course evaluation. During a four-week session, students learn 10 different mindfulness/ meditation techniques to prevent, minimize and address anxiety and promote relaxation in their lives. The successful response to the pilot course prompted the college to send six faculty and staff to an official “train the trainer” Koru training in August 2016 at the medical center of the University of Louisville. After successfully completing the training, the six-member team knew that they had found a very effective and implementable research-based program (Greeson, Juberg, Maytan, James & Rogers, 2014) that would meet the needs of the college population with whom they worked.

Major Lessons Learned from the Preparation Phase

Reflecting on the preparation phase of our approach to implementing MBSR on our campus resulted in key lessons learned.

- Implementing a MBSR program top down, bottom-up and multi-directionally is helpful in securing buy-in and support from various individuals and groups across campus;
- Piloting potential MBSR programs with students and obtaining their feedback before investing in them is critical;
- Training interested and committed staff who want to learn, teach, and carry the “proverbial torch” for MBSR creates buy-in and enthusiasm;
- Planning for how a MBSR program will be sustained financially and instructionally is important; and
- Starting small and modestly allows for mistakes that can be easily corrected with minimal damage; there is always room to scale up.

Before the implementation of our MBSR program, we spent a year preparing the launch of our MBSR program on as many levels and in as many facets of campus life as possible. The obvious involvement of Counseling Services, Residence Life, academic departments, such as Education Studies and Health and Human Performance, goes without saying. There were other units on campus, however, that were tremendously supportive, such as The Office for Institutional Research and Development, which provided much needed data about students (e.g., sources of stress, etc.) and advice and support on how to effectively implement evaluations of MBSR programs. On our campus, the Center for Teaching and Learning provided institutional support by sponsoring faculty learning communities around MBSR topics. These learning communities helped garner broad-based, campus-wide support among the faculty and staff.

Finally, if there was one game-changing variable that helped us launch into a successful first-year implementation of our MBSR program it would be the fact that there was both institutional, or what some faculty and staff labeled, “top-down” or “administrative” mandates AND “bottom-up” or grass roots support via groups of students, faculty and staff very much interested and committed to MBSR strategies. The institutional support from administration provided an overall, campus-wide framework for situating our MBSR program as well as financial support on many levels including but not limited to faculty and staff training in MBSR and resources, such as books and other equipment. At the same time, an institutional mandate is only as successful as the individuals implementing it. The authentic belief and passion of faculty and staff in the power of MBSR to address the stress and anxiety in college students’ lives was as significant to a successful implementation year as administrative support. Without faculty and staff willingness to be trained in MBSR, offer classes in addition to their regular academic teaching load, serve as the “go to” or faces of MBSR, and continually champion its cause, our first year of MBSR would not have occurred.

Implementing the Koru MBSR Program

In the 2016-2017 academic year, the team offered nine Koru courses to the entire campus, three in the fall, three in the spring and three in the summer: eight courses to students and one to faculty. There were a total of 44 students who began Koru courses. All but one course was co-taught. A pre and post stress-anxiety survey was administered in five of the student sections to gauge any impact on the students' perceptions of stress. (Some instructors forgot to administer either the pre-course survey or the post-course survey or students never returned the post-course survey if they took it home to fill out.) Though 44 students started the course, we only counted those students who fully completed the course (i.e., attended all four class sessions) and completed a pre and post survey. Therefore, our sample size for this case study is 29 participants.

The Students and Survey

Of the 29 participants, there were nine freshmen, five sophomores, ten juniors and five seniors. There were five males and 24 females. Reasons for taking the course were varied: "Curiosity," "To help manage my stress," "To feel more grounded," "Improve my life," "stress management," and "To learn more about meditation and implement it in my daily life." The most common reason, however, centered on "want[ing] to learn about mindfulness" (n=12) followed by "Recommended by a Friend" (n=7).

Before the first class began, students were asked to fill out the pre-course "Health and Well-Being Survey," (see Appendix A) which was created based on items of other similar surveys examining stress and anxiety and administered to college populations. Approval to administer this survey was secured from the College IRB. At the conclusion of the last session, students filled out the post-course survey, which was exactly the same instrument.

Because of the campus-wide focus on wellness, we wanted our MBSR Koru classes to not only provide tools to our students to help them address their anxiety and stress but also help us (the instructors) to begin to understand the sources of students' stress and anxiety. We wanted to not only relieve students' stress but also find ways to help students thrive and flourish, and to attain this higher level of wellness, we needed to not only

address the students' individual stories of stress and anxiety but also examine how the institution might be part of the solution.

Sources of Stress

In the pre-course survey, we asked our students to identify various sources of stress and anxiety in their lives. The five top stressors identified by students in no particular order were: 1) academics/grades, 2) balancing labor (a job)/academics and life, 3) exams/papers/tests, 4) lack of time, and 5) finances. These results were particularly interesting because to some degree some of these stressors, such as exams/papers/tests, could be potentially directly addressed by faculty to minimize the stress and anxiety they caused.

Overall Effects of the MBSR Courses to Address Sources of Identified Stress

The quantitative and qualitative impact of the first year of implementation of the MBSR program with our students is not the focus of this article. We do plan to publish on the impacts in the future. However, understanding the effectiveness of the implementation of the program necessitates analyzing data from pre and post surveys to illustrate how such feedback influenced future implementation decisions. Additionally, a key part of our implementation plan included collecting data and feedback on the every Koru course taught.

While we were interested in the impact of MBSR on reducing or relieving stress and anxiety in our students, we were also curious about the general level of stress students were feeling in their daily lives. In a pre and post survey we asked "to what extent does stress affect your daily life/activities?" Students could respond from "not at all," "barely," "mildly," "moderately," "significantly," or "severely." Because this was a self-reporting on a Likert scale, we were looking for a change in the impact of stress on students' lives and ideally a decrease in stress (because of the Koru course) from the pre to post survey results. The table below highlights 29 students' responses to the prompt mentioned above.

Table 1. “To what extent does stress affect your daily life/activities?”

	Not at all	Barely	Mildly	Moderately	Significantly	Severely
Pre-Koru Course Effect of Stress on Daily Life	0	0	5	16	7	1
Post-Koru Course Effect of Stress on Daily Life	1	2	9	11	5	1

Overall, one notices a trend that students were generally reporting that stress was having decreasing severity of impact on their daily activities. In the *pre-course* survey, all the students reported at least a “mild” level of stress with most of them (n=16) reporting moderate stress. In the *post-course* survey, the bulk of students (n=11) still reported a moderate impact of stress on their daily lives but there were also students who reported, “not at all” or “barely” for impacts of stress and there was a slight increase (n= 9) of students reporting “mild” impact and a decrease of students (n=5) reporting “significant” impacts. Interestingly, there was one student (the same student) for whom the impact of stress both before and after the course remained at the “severe” level. In just four short weeks, students were self-reporting some relief from their normal levels of stress and anxiety.

It is worth noting that while the overall trend for the entire group for this case study was a slight decrease in the level of stress on their daily lives, some students reported that their post-course levels of stress *increased*. This was a peculiar and interesting outcome. It was during our weekly check-ins in each MBSR class session, where students talk about their week of practicing MBSR skills, that the instructors learned why some students felt their stress levels increased. We learned, for

example, that the point in the academic term when students filled out the post-survey seemed to make a significant difference. Our courses were four weeks long. In a few instances a course began during a relatively “calm” part of the term but would end just before final exams or the end of a term/before a holiday break, when stress levels across campus tended to be higher in general. Additionally, a few students mentioned personal problems that emerged in the middle of the course, which added to their stress levels. Finally, during one course in the fall, the campus experienced the suicide of a student. As a result, our third Koru class was cancelled. The course spanned the Thanksgiving break and only two students finished the course. The various stress points of an academic semester, such as mid-term exam and final exam sessions also impacted attendance and accounted for most of the attrition from our courses. As mentioned earlier, our courses began with 44 students but ended with 29. One student who dropped the course after her second session noted, “I know Koru helps me manage my stress, and I like the class but I just have too much to do to be able to come to class.” This paradoxical situation is one we want to address in the future. As for the one student whose stress level remained at a severe level before, during and after the course, we were not quite sure how to explain her results because in a written evaluation of the course asking whether she would recommend, she responded, “Yes, yes, yes! I already have” and suggested the instructors offer more classes in Koru.

While the instructors wanted to understand the degree and extent that stress impacted students, they were also interested in knowing to what extent their MBSR knowledge and skills enabled them to decrease and minimize the stress and anxiety in their lives. In other words, we were curious as to whether they could relax whenever they chose. Therefore, students were asked both before and after the course “To what extent are you able to relax when you choose to do so?” (See Appendix A for the survey). Much like the above prompt, students chose from a Likert scale and Table 2. below provides the pre and post-course results.

Table 2. Student Responses Concerning Being Able to Relax at Will

	Not at all	Barely	Sometimes	Easily	Any time I wish	All the time
Pre-Koru course student ability to relax at will	0	7	19	3	0	0
Post-Koru course student ability to relax at will	0	1	17	6	5	0

Part of MBSR training is helping students realize that they can not necessarily control the events that will trigger stress and anxiety for them, but they can control their responses to various stressors through the MBSR practices they learn and practice. We were curious after the four weeks, how easily students felt they could help relax (i.e., de-stress) at will, such as before taking an exam, dealing with a difficult issue, etc.) The post-course results were promising as five students reported being to “relax any time they wish” as opposed to no students being able to do so before the course. Another promising result was the fact that only 1 student said that s/h/ze could “barely” relax in the post-course survey as opposed to seven students before the course.

A Closer Look at One Student-Identified Stressor - Exams/Papers/Tests

As noted previously, students identified very specific stressors in their lives; as faculty members, we were curious about these various stressors because we wondered how we might help students address them during our MBSR sessions. Students reported that exams, papers tests and presentations were extremely stressful. In other words, any high stakes performance assessment was an issue. The table below illustrates the pre and post course results concerning to what degree this stressor impacted students (See Appendix A for

survey). The students had to rate the degree of stress that “exams, papers, tests, etc.” caused them. The white columns are pre-Koru and the gray columns are after students had completed the entire Koru course.

Table 3. *Level of Stress Students Reported Feeling about Exams, Papers and Tests*

Exams, papers, etc. as a severe source of stress (pre-course)	Exams, papers, etc. as a severe source of stress (post-course)	Exams, papers, etc. as a significant source of stress (pre-course)	Exams, papers, etc. as a significant source of stress (post-course)	Exams, papers, etc. as a mild source of stress (pre-course)	Exams, papers, etc. as a mild source of stress (post-course)	Exams, papers, etc. as not or barely any source of stress (pre-course)	Exams, papers, etc. as not or barely any source of stress (post)
5/20 **	4/20	10/20	7/20	2/20	5/20	3/20	4/20
**Sample size is 20 students because one class did not fill out the post -course survey with this particular item.							

Not surprisingly, 15 of the 20 students or 75% reported in the pre-course survey that exams, papers, and tests as being a “severe” or “significant” source of stress for them. In the post-course survey, four weeks later 11 out of 20 students or 55% reported this same level of stress with respect to high stakes assessment - certainly this is an improvement. Additionally, it was significant that nine of the 20 students or 45% in the post-course survey reported that exams, papers, and tests were a “mild” or “barley any” source of stress! This was a promising and intriguing result and we soon realized that the quantitative data only revealed part of the story.

In every Koru session, there is a part of the class devoted to “check-in.” During this time, students hand in their practice logs recording the amount of time they spent practicing the MBSR skills taught to them the previous week and discuss how their week went in terms of highlights and challenges regarding their MBSR practice. Not surprisingly, sources of stress and anxiety are also discussed and naturally the topic of exams, papers, presentations, etc. emerges. As students discussed this topic, we heard many varied reasons as to why it was a stressor. For some students, they had “test anxiety.” For some students, the

actual test or paper was not the issue, it was the fact that they had several tests to prepare for simultaneously. Some students were only stressed about tests or exams in a particular course and/or only about certain kinds of assessments, such as tests versus writing papers. The nuanced and varying responses of students to this stressor forced the Koru instructors to consider how faculty could schedule their course assessments to reduce unhealthy stress and enact an institutional response.

Koru instructors were also able to assist students in choosing from among the many MBSR skills being taught to address this particular stressor. For example, we encouraged students to use belly breathing right before starting an exam or while studying for one. We also encouraged guided imagery or visualization, a technique we teach in the third class. For this skill, we asked the students to visualize, for example, the ideal situation of preparing to take an exam. They can imagine themselves in the classroom, where they will take the test. They can “watch” themselves breathing deeply, rhythmically, and waiting calmly for the professor to hand out the exam. They can “see” themselves calmly answering the questions and finishing the test. Several students utilized this technique while studying for their exams and immediately up to the time of actually taking it. They reported varying degrees of success in remaining calm or less anxious than in previous similar situations.

As instructors, we were thrilled to be able to provide students tools to help them manage their stress and anxiety in response to a very specific event. However, we also realized that our Koru/ MBSR work was only part of the solution. From an institutional point of view, the administration of exams, papers, and tests are events that are directly controlled by faculty. Faculty can address the anxiety and stress students feel around these events through scheduling and possibly modification of the kinds of assessments being used. For students who reported that it was the scheduling of assessments that was a source of stress, professors can play a significant role. They can make sure exam or quiz dates are on the syllabus at the beginning of the semester rather than announcing such dates in class which might not provide as much preparation time. This is a situation that can be easily addressed through advanced planning. Additionally, professors could consult with students on the best

time to schedule assessments. Often the preparation for an exam can be a source of stress, so faculty might consult with students before a paper is due or an exam is to be given and actually address why they feel anxious or stressed. These minor shifts in instruction could alleviate or eliminate the severity of stress students feel and might even lead to increased academic performance (Bergen-Cico, Possemato, & Sanghyeon 2013). These are just some examples of how an institution can easily address anxiety and stress around assessments. Finally, because the instructors of this course are also faculty members, they have lead students in brief MBSR activities before giving an exam or tests, which seems to bring some relief to all the students.

Major Lessons Learned During the Implementation of MBSR Courses

Beginning a new approach to teaching is always an adventure, and often offers many new understandings. This was true in the implementation of a MBSR approach, as several lessons emerged.

- Collect pre/post MBSR course data from the beginning and enlist assistance from colleagues or institutional offices of evaluation/assessment in creating surveys;
- Arrange for MBSR instructors to meet as often as possible or at least share stories about class experiences during the first semester of the academic year, so any program corrections can be made for the subsequent semester;
- Tie mindfulness into as many campus programs, initiatives and events as possible (e.g., faculty learning communities, campus speakers, counseling centers, etc.) and keep it on the radar of the campus;
- Make sure feedback from students is frequent and continual; they are the key to support and sustainability;
- Consider how institutional structures can be modified to address stressful events, such as examination periods;
- At the conclusion of the implementation year, have an evaluation meeting with everyone involved with teaching MBSR courses to plan changes for the next year and analyze course data.

In reviewing our first year of implementation, the theme that emerges is “formative assessment.” We did not meet nearly as often as we would have liked, only once at the end of the first semester and then immediately before the implementation of the second year. However, because some of our team worked in the same academic department, three of us, and because we were connected in other ways, email often served as our default communication venue. If an instructor encountered an issue, such as students missing classes or low enrollment, we would share such concerns with one another, research possible solutions and share them with one another. Finally, one of the most valuable aspects of the first year was the collection of data both for scholarly and evaluative purposes to provide guidance for the second year of implementation.

Looking Ahead – Next Steps After Year One

We are currently in the second year of our MBSR program, so there is little to report at this point in time. However, using the data collected from the first implementation year was invaluable on several levels. For example, in discussing our Koru course evaluations and some of the challenges we faced, we realized that there were certain times of the year and certain days and times that students were more likely to sign up for a course. We also recognized that the lack of credit for the course and so many competing demands on students’ time was a real challenge. The lack of credit in some ways prevented many students from signing up because to sign up they would exceed the institutional cap of 4.5 credits without a waiver. The lack of credit also meant that when students felt pressured to choose between attending class and another obligation, they would skip class, so we noticed attendance was an issue. Because of this issue, we came up with various ways to incentivize attendance at all four Koru classes, such as letting the students keep the course text instead of paying for it.

Major Lessons After Year One of the Implementation of the MBSR Courses

- Use of course data to improve the delivery of MBSR courses and for further scholarship;

- Consider the next level of sustainability, such as possibly recruiting and training new MBSR instructors;
- Consider opportunities for scholarship from the data collected on the implementation of MBSR courses;
- Start a plan for the next level of financial sustainability and ensure that all involved (e.g., campus administration) are informed.

The second year can be difficult. In our case, we had a successful first year and it can be difficult to sustain success. Because our program is not new this year, we no longer enjoy the novelty status we had last year that attracted a lot of attention across campus. Additionally, there are new challenges. We have one less instructor due to a sabbatical and another who had to pull back on her participation due to other commitments. Regardless, we are pushing forward and continuously assessing our MBSR offerings. We also recognize we have to look beyond this year and consider sustainability on several fronts. For example, besides the incentivizing strategies mentioned previously, we are exploring possibilities of the MBSR courses being offered for credit or possibly integrating MBSR content or entire Koru courses into existing course offerings, such as academic courses in health or human performance departments. Additionally, plans for financial sustainability are crucial. Fortunately, MBSR programs are not resource intensive, but there are expenses, such as course texts and ongoing training for instructors. Therefore, the second year entails simultaneously looking backwards and forward as we look ahead to our third year.

Now What

Being in our second year of offering Koru classes, we are realizing more and more the benefit of linking Koru to existing institutional structures, such as potentially integrating it (without changing the curriculum) into existing health and human performance classes. This move would enable more students to be exposed to the benefits of Koru. Another potentially promising venue is a summer program for incoming freshmen. Since 2014, Berea College has held an intensive summer program for incoming freshmen, who take two college credit

bearing courses. These freshmen are exposed to the daily realistic experiences they can expect to encounter as a student during the academic year at Berea College, which means handling the stress of meeting academic deadlines, making important decisions, time management, possibly dealing with homesickness and myriad of other stressors. During the summer of 2017 we offered a Koru class to some of these freshmen and at the end of the fall semester (December 2017) we plan to contact them to see how they are doing and compare their well-being to that of their peers who did not take the course. What we realized in offering this trial Koru class to incoming freshmen during the summer is that we potentially have a means of introducing many Berea College students to mindfulness before they begin their college academic career. Instead of being reactive, we have an opportunity to be proactive in helping college students manage their stress and anxiety while also learning life-long mindfulness skills.

Questions Going into our Second Year

During the first year of implementing our Koru MBSR course, we were mainly concerned with logistics and meeting the needs of students. Fortunately, the pre and post-course assessments and course evaluations did provide some very informative data going into our second year and one question immediately raised for us concerns the longitudinal effects and benefits of mindfulness. For example, are our first year students still practicing their mindfulness skills? Why or why not? To what extent are they still feeling the benefits of mindfulness? At what point might we offer an advanced Koru class for those who have taken the first Koru class? How can we assist students in being more independent and proactive with respect to sustaining and promoting mindfulness among their peers? How might we create mindfulness ambassadors among the students and extend MBSR into the residence halls? These are some of the questions we hope to explore during our second year of implementation and the answers to them will help us shape our third year of offering Koru MBSR courses.

Conclusion

It is clear from the preliminary results of this pilot case study that a MBSR course can provide immediate relief to emerging adults in learning how to manage their stress and anxiety. One question raised for us is the longevity of such effects. This is a skill that can not only enhance their college experience but also be taken into their post-college lives. The instructional team, however, realizes that this course is only one part of a multi-faceted solution to the pervasive and deep issue of stress and anxiety our college students experience, and our continuing challenge will be finding where in the students' existing college experiences, **all** students can be taught MBSR strategies and supported in maintaining their mindfulness practices.

In examining and analyzing our experiences of how to grow the Koru program, we realized how fortunate we were that a number of variables came together at just the right time to help us launch Koru.

- A broad interest and support for mindfulness beyond the college (e.g., mindfulness in the public realm);
- College leadership and administration who believed in MBSR practices (we didn't seek out any specific administrators; they all were supportive);
- A team of committed mindfulness instructors, who represented campus leadership in this initiative;
- A top-down and bottom-up approach to mindfulness (i.e., institutional initiatives, wellness policies, individual mindfulness classes)
- Identification of where Koru could be integrated into existing institutional structures (e.g., summer programs) so as to minimize excessive start-up preparation

It is clear that the story told about this particular institution's experience of implementing a MBSR course is not entirely transferable to another institution even if it is a co-educational, small, rural, liberal arts institution. Rather, it is hoped that aspects of our story and approach are "seeds" to generate ideas for other institutions as they embark on their own institutional journeys of introducing mindfulness on their college/university campuses.

References

- American College Health Association (2009). *National College Health Assessment*. American College Health Association: Lanthicum, MD.
- Arnett, J. (2015). *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from the late teens through the twenties*. (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press: New York, NY.
- Berea College (2017). *Student Stress Study*. [PowerPoint Slides]. Office of Institutional Research: Berea, KY.
- Bergen-Cico, D, Possemato, K and Cheon, S, (2013). Examining the efficacy of a brief mindfulness-based stress reduction (Brief MBSR) program on psychological health. *Journal of American College Health*, 61(6), 348-362. doi: 10.1080/07448481.2013.813853.
- Deckro, G. R., Ballinger, K. M., Hoyt, M., Wilcher, M., Dusek, J., Myers, P., & Benson, H. (2002). The evaluation of a mind/body intervention to reduce psychological distress and perceived stress in college students. *Journal of American College Health*, 50, 281–287.
- Greeson, J., Juberg, M., Maytan, M., James, M. & Rogers, H. (2014). A randomized controlled Trial of Koru: A mindfulness program for college students and other emerging adults. *Journal of American College Health*, 62 (4), 222–233.
- Hicks, T & Heastie, S. (2008). High school to college transition: A profile of the stressors, physical and psychological health issues that affect the first-year on-campus college student. *Journal of College Diversity*, 15 (3), 143-147.
- Peer, J., Hillman, S., Van Hoet, E. (2015). The effects of stress on the lives of emerging adult college students: An exploratory analysis. *Adult Span Journal*, 14 (2), 90-99.
- Rogers, H. (2016). *The mindful twenty-something: Life skills to handle stress . . . and everything else*. New Harbinger Publications: Oakland, CA.
- Rogers, H. & Maytan, M. (2012). *Mindfulness for the next generation. Helping emerging adults manage stress and lead healthier lives*. Oxford University Press: New York, NY.

Appendix A

Health and Well-Being Survey

Dear Participant, we are delighted that you are exploring strategies to improve/enhance your emotional health by signing up for this mindfulness-based, stress reduction course. The mindfulness techniques you will learn over the next four weeks can help you cope with academic and life stress in positive and productive ways. To make this course as useful as possible, please take a few moments to fill out this survey. You'll be asked to complete a post-course survey after the fourth session.

Name: _____

Preferred Pronoun: _____

Class Standing (circle one): Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Senior Plus

Major: _____

Number of credits this semester: _____

Why are you taking this course?

Please rate the following possible sources of stress in your life and if there are source(s) not listed please include them and rate them.

Source of Stress	none	barely any	mild	significant	severe
Roommate/Living situation					
Family and/or relatives					
Finances					
Labor					
Academics/grades					
Balancing labor/academics/life					
Friends					
Partner/significant other/marriage					
Exams/papers/tests					
Lack of Time					
Other:					
Other:					
Other:					

Please indicate the symptoms of stress you experience and to what degree.

Symptoms of Stress	none	barely any	mild	significant	severe
Sweating					
Headache					
Insomnia					
Loss of appetite					
Food cravings					
Nausea					
Diarrhea					

Implementing a Mindfulness-based, Stress-Reduction Program (Wong)

Jaw clenching					
Grinding teeth					
Nervous habits (fidgeting, feet tapping)					
Frequent colds and/or infections					
Rashes, itching, hives					
Difficulty concentrating					
Trouble learning new information					
Forgetful					
Disorganized					
Feeling overwhelmed					
Frequent crying spells					
Loneliness or feelings of worthlessness					
Frustration					
Irritability/edginess					
Over-reactive to minor annoyances					
Increased number of minor accidents					

Please indicate all of strategies you have used to address your stress and rate their effective. For the strategies you do not use and have not tried mark the N/A box.

Stress Management Strategies	very effective	effective	moderately effective	somewhat effective	not effective	N/A
Exercising						
Talking to a friend						
Talking to family member						
Talking to a mental health professional						
Listening to music						
Eating						
Not eating						
Working						
Mediating						
Sleeping						
Massage						
Engaging in						

a hobby						
Taking over the counter medication						
Taking prescription medication						
Smoking						
Looking at phone						
Withdrawing from family/friends						
Volunteering						
Watching TV/movies						
Engage in risky behaviors						
Other:						
Other:						
Other:						

How would you rate your stress level at this moment?
 None Barely Any Mild Moderate Significant Severe

To what extent does stress affect your daily life/activities?
 Not at all Barely Any Mild Moderate Significant Severe

To what extent are you able to relax when you choose to do so?
 Not at all Barely Sometimes Easily Any time I wish All the time

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Loving-Kindness, Community-Building, Deep Listening: A Case for Contemplative Department Chair Leadership

Paula Selvester
California State University, Chico

Abstract

Successful chairs must be fluent in resource allocation, budgeting, legal issues, faculty recruitment, hiring, retention, performance evaluation, promotion, and tenure, conflict management, and more. Yet, evidence shows that chairs often receive little or no training before their appointment (Flaherty, 2016). How do department chairs manage this learning curve while also leading their departments to forward their department mission? How can contemplative practices provide solid ground for academic department chairs to manage stress, learn quickly, develop transformative leadership skills and build a department into a restorative community of dedicated colleagues? Contemplative practices, such as Loving-kindness meditation, can support academic leaders in their efforts to remain centered and emotionally stable while also modeling and leading with wholeness, equanimity, love, and purpose. Contemplative leadership strategies, such as building a restorative department community in which wholeness and connectedness can be nurtured to create a sustainable context of well-being, will be discussed.

Introduction

Being an academic department chair in higher education is like being in middle management. Squeezed between stakeholders who both have needs they want fulfilled - the college dean often has one agenda for the department chair and the chair's faculty colleagues have another. The office assistant also has expectations and sometimes needs direct supervision. New chairs often have little or no job training; yet, they must walk

into their positions prepared to help their departments through hard budget times, fight for new faculty lines and manage the challenges of providing equitable, flexible, and accessible course programming. Successful chairs must be fluent in resource allocation, budgeting, legal issues, faculty recruitment, hiring, retention, performance evaluation, promotion, and tenure, conflict management, and more. To both effectively manage and successfully lead, a department chair is often challenged to create and maintain positive morale, locate sources for external funding, develop department mission and vision statements, set short and long term strategic plans and goals, and lead program assessment. Yet, the evidence shows that chairs often receive little or no training before their appointment (Flaherty, 2016). Dealing with so many new challenges can lead high achievers feeling exhausted, inadequate, lonely, fearful, and anxiety-ridden. When the learning curve has been overcome, just meeting the daily expectations of faculty colleagues, deans, and keeping your career on track is demanding.

How do department chairs manage these stressors and this learning curve while also pursuing the goals of their departments, forwarding the department mission, and modeling organizational leadership qualities that will garner the respect and admiration of faculty, students, and staff? How can contemplative practices provide solid ground for academic department chairs to manage stress, learn quickly, develop transformative leadership skills and build a department into a restorative community of dedicated colleagues?

Leadership in higher education for department chairs is complex. In her article, *Forgotten Chairs*, Flaherty (2016) noted that training for department chairs is woefully inadequate and that most need professional development opportunities to assist them in doing what is generally a very stressful job. Flaherty (2016) reviewed a study of academic department chairs and listed the stressors they experience: Among the top 10 were: Balancing administrative and scholarly demands; maintaining scholarly productivity; balancing work-life demands; keeping current; keeping up with email; heavy workload; evaluating faculty excessive self-expectations; and job interfering with personal time (Flaherty, 2016). To manage such a complex and layered job description and the stress that comes with learning it,

the new department chair needs to identify strong leadership qualities to employ within an effective leadership framework or model.

Little systematic research has focused on the study of departmental leadership in higher education (Bryman, 2007) and there little or no research or inclusion of contemplative mindfulness strategies or concepts in any of the current departmental leadership literature. In fact, the most current work on leadership for department chairs, for example, is being done at the high school level (Gaubatz, & Ensminger, 2017; Klar, 2013) rather than institutions of higher education (IHEs). Never the less, in his work to identify research linking leadership to effectiveness in IHEs, Bryman (2007) reviewed the literature and identified 13 aspects of leader behavior that were found to be associated with effective departments. Among the qualities Bryman (2007) identified as effective were: "Clear sense of vision," "Being considerate," "Treating staff fairly and with integrity," "Being trustworthy," "Allowing participating in key decision-making," "Communicating well about department direction," "Creating positive atmosphere," and "Providing feedback on performance." (p. 697).

In a more recent study, Black (2015) took up the question of effective higher education leadership emphasizing the changing landscape in higher education. With market globalization, growing internationalization of institutions, the proliferation of for-profit enterprises, and decreases in tax based funding, and decreasing tenure density, the characterization of effective leadership in IHE context is not so easily discerned. Black (2015) examined existing leadership competency frameworks and found that teacher-centered, shared decision-making models are most valued by faculty, yet, many leaders in these settings exercise 19th century, industrial era power and control models (Macdonald, 1998; Kennedy, 1994) drawing upon "rules, incentives, threats, contracts, and standards" (Black, 2015, p.2) which is in conflict with the expectations of the people they are trying to lead. This top-down leadership model is often met with hostility from academic colleagues who find this view autocratic and hierarchical (Goffee & Jones, 2009). Instead of nurturing a community of colleagues who can work harmoniously together, an autocratic model foments fear and competition. More

compatible with academic settings are transformative, visionary models of leadership that emphasize vision, mission, and relationships (Black, 2014). Taken together, the qualities of effective leadership within the context of a transformational leadership model set department leaders in a positive direction. Astin & Astin (2000) summarized in a simple list the over-arching aims and values of leadership:

- “To create a supportive environment where people can grow, thrive, and live in peace with one another;
- To promote harmony with nature and thereby provide sustainability for future generations; and
- To create communities of reciprocal care and shared responsibility where every person matters and each person’s welfare and dignity is respected and supported.” (p. 11)

Visionary, considerate, fair and equitable, trustworthy — these personal qualities resonate with transformative models of leadership which describe the leader as a change agent and emotionally intelligent. This type of leader inspires with vision and purpose in order to intrinsically motivate the employee to work toward the improvement of the organization (Bass, 1990; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Goleman, 1997). A transformative leader seeks to create a supportive, restorative and caring department community grounded in a growth-mindset, sharing a sense of collective responsibility and holding peace and harmony with nature at the center. A good leader in this sense becomes self-aware, authentic and empathic in order to listen, collaborate, and share in a common purpose with others (Astin & Astin, 2000). However, learning how to manage a budget, address conflict, and follow legal requirements take time and experience; in the meantime, developing a leadership style that radiates calm, centeredness, and confidence can help in managing a new department chair’s stress, fear, and anxiety while learning on the job. Contemplative practices geared toward mindful centeredness can support a fledgling department leader who wants to be a transformational leader who can build a caring department community in the midst of the stressors of academic life (meeting retention, tenure, and promotion while learning on job).

Although contemplative practice is referenced less if at all in leadership and organizational theory literature, contemplative practices in the classroom are becoming more common place. In fact, in higher education, contemplative pedagogy is being used across disciplines and institutions. The emerging field of contemplative pedagogy sheds light on practices that can be used in leadership. Barbezat and Bush (2014) reported "From law schools to community colleges, liberal arts colleges, and large research universities, contemplative practices are being used in the classroom as well as in student and health services, counseling centers, teaching and learning centers, athletics, and administration" (p. 11).

Contemplative pedagogical practices are broadly considered to meet a variety of objectives that could assist a busy department chair among which are building focus and attention, contemplation and introspection, compassion and empathy, insight, creativity and inquiry. Contemplative pedagogies which include mindfulness exercises are designed to strengthen attention which assists in complex problem solving (Barbezat & Bush, 2014). Contemplative introspection exercises, such as *lectio divina*, are designed to assist in deepening reading comprehension (Barbezat & Bush, 2014). Immordino-Yang & Damasio (2008) have demonstrated that contemplative exercises that focus upon empathy and social awareness increase learning outcomes.

If these practices in the classroom can build focus, deepen knowledge, strengthen attention, and assist learning in our students, department chairs might well consider employing contemplative practice to manage stress and regulate emotions and learn new skills. Barbezat & Bush (2014) asserted that contemplative practices assist in developing mindful awareness of emotional states. They make the case that thoughtful, conscious emotional awareness can lead to better emotional regulation which impacts well-being and decision-making. By being more in tune with emotional states, and having empathy for oneself and others, the contemplative practitioner has the opportunity and space to explore personal meaning and purpose more universally.

Contemplative practices such as Loving-kindness meditation can support academic leaders in their efforts to remain centered

and emotionally stable while also modeling and leading with wholeness, equanimity, love, and purpose. Contemplative leadership strategies such as building a restorative department community in which wholeness and connectedness can be nurtured create a sustainable context of well-being.

Loving-kindness Practice: Grounding Your Leadership in Love

Building positive relationships among your colleagues is critical when creating a collaborative department community focused on a common purpose. On a deep level, human beings need to feel love and trust for and from the people around them (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In fact, physical and emotional well-being is positively impacted as the sense of connectedness to others increases (Brown, Nesse, Vinokur, & Smith, 2003). In most universities, it takes years to achieve job security, get tenure and promotion. There is constant pressure to publish for peer review, receive positive student evaluations, obtain grants, and manage committee service in order to maintain job security or promotion. Department chairs often have to lead faculty through these challenges while juggling external obstacles such as budget cuts, dropping enrollment, or accreditation reviews. Years of struggle, fear, anxiety, competition, and isolation take their toll on an organization. Departments can become dehumanized and the individuals in them vulnerable to bullying, professional jealousy, and neuroticism.

Yet, research confirms that depression, anxiety, and disease are actually decreased when people feel socially connected to others (Hawkley, Masi, Berry, & Cacioppo, 2006). Loving-kindness meditation can assist a department chair in developing skills of self-possession, calmness, and composure born of compassion and empathy for oneself and others. Salzberg (1995) known widely for her book, *Loving-Kindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness* thought that sometimes as individuals or as groups we seek to preserve our identities and/or sense of belonging. Fear and anxiety, are isolating. We become removed from our inner lives and feelings. Loving-kindness practice is a meditation of positive regard: toward oneself, one's friends, strangers, and even one's "enemies."

While being committed to mindfulness practice at home is a laudable goal, the truth is that with the needs of children and spouses at home and committee work, teaching, publishing, and department chair responsibilities at work, finding time to sit quietly or do yoga everyday can seem impossible and perhaps even another “to do” on the long list.

Academic leaders who get too busy to ground themselves with meaning and purpose do so at their own peril. Leaders who overcome (or ignore) their learning curve and feel in control of the job may find themselves enjoying and wielding the power of leading their faculty colleagues, giving into the foibles of vanity and self-interest. They may forget to demonstrate positive regard and compassion for others or let the demands and needs of those they lead to seem like threats to their self-image. This untethering from the ground of mindfulness can lead to grasping at power and security eschewing love, wisdom, and peace. Combining Loving-kindness with walking intentionally creates many opportunities to make daily practice realistic. While it is common to practice Loving-kindness meditation while sitting, busy chairs can practice Loving-kindness meditation while walking from the parking lot or metro station to the office. Loving-kindness intentions can be repeated as mantras while walking in order to focus and center the mind. Bodhipaksa noted, “Mantras can also be used as “mind protectors” while walking, doing the dishes, or even in sitting meditation.” (<http://www.wildmind.org/mantras/>). Chanting internally Loving-kindness intentions can center the practitioner in compassion and positive regard for oneself and others.

Salzberg (1995) described four classic phrases to repeat as a mantra with the version I use for myself in parentheses:

- “May I be free from danger.” (May I be safe.)
- “May I have mental happiness.” (May I be free of anxiety)
- “May I have physical happiness.” (May I be healthy)
- “May I have ease of well-being.” (May I live and work in peace with everyone)

This set of loving wishes repeated in a mantra can be practiced first on your own behalf –from yourself to yourself.

Then, they are offered to a friend or supporter and to a neutral person for whom you have few feelings, positive or negative and finally to someone for whom you have an aversion, feel hostility, or resentment. Feel your feet press down on the earth and feel the earth's support. As you take each step, meditate on the sentences and words of compassion for yourself, contemplating and feeling deeply this love and compassion for yourself.

As you walk from your office to the department meeting, repeat the meditation focusing upon a friend. When heading to a meeting in which you will be met with hostility or resistance, repeat the meditation for the individuals or group that you know needs your equanimity. When walking to give a presentation, repeat the meditation for yourself and then the audience, arriving with unconditional love for yourself as presenter and for the audience as receivers.

Your Department Community: Creating a Mindful Culture

In academic contexts, faculty may be plagued by their attachments and desires. They may desire positive regard from students. They want to be held in high esteem by their colleagues. They desire tenure and job security. Attachment leads to what Buddhists call, "seeking and guarding" –seeking success and guarding against failure (e.g., endless working on manuscripts, for example, guarding against the stealing of intellectual property, worrying about promotions, and negative student evaluations, etc.). Seeking and guarding lead to fear and anxiety which feed grasping, which in turn causes an endless cycle of more fear, anxiety, and distrust. These are toxic emotions in a department where power structures exist, and these desires already exist in the lecturer vs tenure-track and assistant, associate, and full professor hierarchy. The chair of a department may be perceived to hold the keys to a colleague's success through the evaluation process, the scheduling and assignment of classes, and the support of professional development activities through resource allocation. Salzberg (1995) wisely noted: "We resent people or things that seem to obstruct the fulfillment of that desire. We feel envy and jealousy" (p. 50). Some believe that the "publish or perish" culture of the academy created such feelings and others have said that by living in a context of individualism and competition our

relationships have become fragmented by fear, blame, and retribution (Block, 2009).

The creation of a compassionate department community that allows for open communication and trust is a contemplative leadership practice that allows for human relationships and the sense of connection and even commitment to take place. Department meetings are a site for communicating transformative values, building a culture of belonging, and developing a restorative community of trust and authenticity. Restorative, compassionate communities are characterized by accountability, encouragement, support, opportunity, and personal transformation (Block, 2009; Zehr, 2015).

In his book, *Community: The Structure of Belonging*, Peter Block (2009) asserts that there is an architecture to creating spaces for transformation, creativity, restoration, and healing and has the potential for “bridging aliveness and wholeness to our notions of leadership, citizenship, social structures and context, which are essential in creating the community of belonging and restoration we desire” (p.19). In these spaces, everyone has gifts to share, dissent is welcome, and commitment is required. Blaming, fault finding, retribution, advice giving are unwelcome. These spaces can become restorative communities that turn away from problem solving often leading to retribution and blame and turn toward conversations of collective possibility and accountability bringing the gifts of those on the margins to the center. When building such departmental communities, the contemplative leader’s responsibility is to create nurturing contexts that focus on a future of generosity, accountability, commitment and gifts; initiate and convene conversations that build these restorative department communities; and listen carefully and attentively. Using Block’s structure of belonging, contemplative department leaders can create restorative communities through five conversations: “possibility, ownership, dissent, commitment, and gifts” (p. 112).

Possibility conversations focus upon the future where creation and vision can take place rather than focus on the past where failure and improvement often dominate in people’s minds. Blaming, analyzing the past, punishing oneself or others for perceived failures does not take place. Focusing upon what is possible with collaboration, creativity and commitment center

the conversation. *Ownership* conversations follow the *possibility work*. Trust and love can only develop through accountability. Being fully present, owning one's part in the experience, prepares everyone for commitment to what is being planned, decided, or created. The next conversation allows for *dissent*. Contemplative leadership practice creates space for doubt and diversity of opinion. Serious reservations are a natural consequence of being fully awake and present. Who among us hasn't wondered during a challenging moment: "How did I get here?" However, Block asserts that questioning and dissent can be seen as disloyal or not being a good team player especially in patriarchal organizations. Policing dissent destroys trust and community building because it devalues diversity of opinion. With this intimacy built, conversations now work towards *commitment*. The promise at this stage is what Block (2009) called the sacred means by which we become accountable (p.138). The contemplative leader can hold space open for refusal or a request to pass; however, it is critical that the member honor his or her word. This integrity supports the community cohesiveness and safety.

Creating department communities built of trust and possibility lean away from focusing on deficiencies, past failures, problems and lean into strengths, agency, and the possibilities of the future. Contemplative leaders can build compassionate department communities and lead restorative conversations prepared by the strength and mindful centering of loving-kindness meditation grounded in the connectedness that can be created through the contemplative practice of *deep listening*.

Deep Listening: Building Organizational Capacity for Compassion and Empathy

Deep listening is a contemplative leadership strategy to use during *dissent conversations* or during times when it is important to be present, open, and free of assumptions and the compulsion to analyze what is being said (Barbezat & Bush, 2014; Fischer, 2004). Without feeling defensive or trying to control or analyze the dissent, a contemplative leader, centered in Loving-kindness, can witness inwardly and outwardly the thoughts and emotions that come up, maintain focus on the speaker, and hold the space open for the speaker to express concerns. Listening without

interrupting or “shoulding,” modeling the acceptance of speaking truth to power, asking for more information, and being curious are good strategies (Brady, 2009).

The set of guidelines below has been modified from a pedagogical practice published in *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education* (Barbezat & Bush, 2014) to a set of guidelines for a situation in which a department chair might practice *deep listening* to a *dissent* conversation in a department meeting or during office conversation with a faculty member. The purpose is for the department chair to deepen compassion, empathy, and appreciation for listener and provide a model to others of *deep listening* practice and its benefits.

- Begin *deep listening* by taking a deep breath, relax your face, unclench your teeth, loosen your jaw, let your tongue fall away from the roof of your mouth, let go of preconceptions and assumptions and the urge to judge, interpret, and react to what the speaker is saying.
- Assure the speaker that you have set this time set aside for the speaker (“This time is yours.”) Let the speaker know that she may sit in silence if she runs out of things to say, that you will let her decide if she needs to say something more, and that she can decide when she is finished and wants a response. The point is to assure the speaker you will not interrupt.
- During *deep listening* sit relaxed and listen in silence. Give your full attention to the speaker, show acknowledgment of the speaker's concerns with nodding if appropriate. Notice the urge to coach, identify with, chime in, interrupt or reassure. Just feel and notice these urges and resist the urge to react. Keep focusing your attention on the speaker with loving-kindness. Notice the thoughts and feelings that come to mind and let them float away as you continue to turn your attention to the speaker. If the speaker falls silent, sit quietly with this silence, and respond to the listener when she is ready.
- When the listener is ready for a response, paraphrase the content, the gist, the emotions and the wants and needs that are being expressed without analysis. Try to identify and paraphrase the intention of the speaker. Keep working with the listener as she corrects or refines

her message until the listener is satisfied that she has been heard.

- If a further response is warranted (problem-solving, decision-making, conflict resolution, etc.) move together towards the next step. Although space does not allow a full review of non-violent communication strategies that might follow *deep listening*, Marshall Rosenberg's book, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life* is an excellent resource.

Conclusion

In leadership and business management literature, Bolman and Deal (2011) in *Leading with Soul: An Uncommon Journey of the Spirit*, asserted that "the heart of leadership lives in the heart of the leader" (p.15). They make the case that leaders must make a conscious effort to claim their souls, lead with conviction, discover their gifts, and share in community and celebration. In *The Heart of Learning: Spirituality in Education*, (Glazer, 1994) has warned that American education has become "grounded in disconnection" setting apart the sacred as separate from ordinary life (p. 9). He and others (Palmer, 2004) warned that we risk living a life of divided selves." Glazer (1994) argued that this kind of dividedness and disconnection breeds nihilism, despair, mindlessness, and selfishness; yet, by returning to the "sacredness as the ground of learning" we can resolve this disconnection with awareness and wholeness. It has been argued that higher education is in fact a spiritual enterprise where the meaning and purpose of life should be considered of paramount importance (Bolman & Deal, 1995; Palmer 1998, 2004; Kronman, 2007). Contemplative department leaders can return their departments to sacred ground.

Department chairs can practice contemplative leadership, centering themselves in loving-kindness and building department communities of belonging and trust using deep listening to manage conflict, lead with compassion, and restore wholeness among their faculty colleagues. It must be kept in mind also that university students, their education and their futures are the *raison d'être* for department chairs and faculty. What if any are the benefits of contemplative department leadership for students?

Astin and Astin (2000) asserted that Institutions of higher education are the social contexts in which future leaders of the nation are developed. Since faculty typically fixate on imparting their disciplinary knowledge to students, they may not see the immediate value in intentionally revealing and calling attention to the personal qualities that are most likely to be crucial to effective leadership: “self-understanding, listening skills, empathy, honesty, integrity, and the ability to work collaboratively. (Astin & Astin, 2000, p. 48). Astin and Astin (2000) wisely stated:

In other words, we are implicitly modeling certain leadership values in the way we conduct ourselves professionally: how we govern ourselves, how we deal with each other as professional colleagues, and how we run our institutions. If we want our students to acquire the qualities of effective leaders, then we have to model these same qualities, not only in our individual professional conduct, but also in our curriculum, our pedagogy, our institutional policies, and our preferred modes of governance. (p. 30)

Contemplative department heads must lead faculty, staff, and students with heart focusing upon meaning, purpose, and mindful use of contemplative practices to stay centered, whole, and supportive while building department communities with faculty, staff, and students that are restorative, filled with possibility, creativity, and hope. Department chairs have the opportunity to lead academic departments that value community, nurture faculty well-being, and ultimately pave the way for this “aliveness” to be shared and modeled with students. The daily dilemmas that a department leader faces can be brought into focus as opportunities for mindful practice. Contemplative leadership is a transformational leadership that at its center is loving, kind, expansive, and heart-centered.

References

- Astin, A. W., & Astin, H. S. (2000) *Leadership reconsidered: Engaging higher education in social change*. Battle Creek, MI: Kellogg Foundation.
- Barbezat, D. P. & Bush, M. (2104). *Contemplative pedagogy in higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley and Sons.
- Bass, B. M. (1990). From transactional to transformational leadership: learning to share the vision, *Organizational Dynamics* 18 (3) pp. 19-31.
- Bass, B.M. & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational leadership*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 497–529.
- Black, S. (2015). Qualities of effective leadership in higher Education. *Open Journal of Leadership* 4, 54-66.
- Block, (2009). *Community: The structure of belonging*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Brady, M. (2009). *Right listening: Contemplative practices for fostering kindness and compassion*. Langley, WA: Paidela Press.
- Brown, S. L., Nesse, R. M., Vinokur, A. D., & Smith, D. M. (2003). Providing social support may be more beneficial than receiving it: Results from a prospective study of mortality. *Psychological Science*, 14, 320–327.
- Bryman, A. (2007). Effective leadership in higher education: A literature review, *Studies in Higher Education*, 32, 693-710.
- Bolman, L. G. & Deal, T. (2011). *Leading with soul: An uncommon journey of the spirit*. San Francisco, CA.: Jossey-Bass.
- Flaherty, C. (2016). Forgotten chairs. *Inside Higher Ed* Retrieved June 17, 2017 <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/12/01/new-study-suggests-training-department-chairs-woefully-inadequate-most-institutions>.
- Fischer, N. (2004). *Taking our places: The Buddhist path to truly growing up*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Gaubatz, J. A., & Ensminger, D. C. (2017). Department chairs as change agents. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 45(1), 141-163. doi:10.1177/1741143215587307
- Glazer, S. (1994). *The heart of learning: spirituality in education*. New York, NY: Penguin
- Goffee, R., & Jones, G. (2009). *Clever: leading your smartest, most creative people*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press.
- Goleman, D. (1997). *Emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam.
- Hawkley, L. C., Masi, C. M., Berry, J. D., & Cacioppo, J. T. (2006). Loneliness is a unique predictor of age-related differences in systolic blood pressure. *Psychology and Aging*, 21, 152–164.
- Kronman, A. T. (2017). *Education's end: Why our colleges and universities have given up on the meaning of life*. Binghamton, NY: Vail-Ballou Press.
- Immordino-Yang, M.H. & Damsio, A. (2008). We feel, therefore we learn: The relevance of affective and social neuroscience of education. In M. H. Immordino-Yang (Ed.), *The Jossey Bass reader on the brain and learning* (pp. 183-198). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Kennedy, C. (1994). *Managing with the gurus*. London: Random House.

- Klar, H. W. (2013). Principals Fostering the Instructional Leadership Capacities of Department Chairs: A Strategy for Urban High School Reform. *Journal Of School Leadership*, 23(2), 324-361.
- Macdonald, J. (1998). *Calling a halt to mindless change*. New York: American Management Association International.
- Palmer, P (1998). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. San Francisco, Ca: Jossey-Bass.
- Palmer, P (2004). *A hidden wholeness: A journey toward the undivided life*. San Francisco, Ca: Jossey-Bass.
- Rosenberg, M. B. (2015). *Nonviolent communication: A language of life*. Encinitas, CA: PuddleDancer press.
- Salzberg, S. (1995). *Loving-kindness: The revolutionary art of happiness*. Boston, Mass: Shambala Classics.
- Zehr, H. (2015). *The little book of restorative justice* New York, NY: Good Books.

Finding Center: Towards Increasing Clarity and Reducing Anxiety in Statistics Class

Lawrence M. Lesser
The University of Texas at El Paso

Abstract

This paper describes the motivation, creation, implementation, and assessment of a mindfulness activity tailored for a statistics literacy course. The course was taught by the author at a medium-sized urban research-intensive university in the Southwest with a predominantly Hispanic/Latino population. At the spring 2017 semester's last regular class meeting, the author debuted the activity and administered an anonymous survey (see Appendices). While survey results are viewed as preliminary (e.g., due to the one-time use of the intervention with a modest number of students), the students' responses were very positive and encouraging of further use and exploration, including incorporating content connections.

Introduction

The use of contemplative pedagogies in higher education has been gaining national visibility over the last two decades thanks to books such as Barbezat and Bush (2014), conferences (e.g., Mindfulness in Education Conference; Contemplative Practice in Higher Education conference), and organizations (Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education; Mindfulness and the Contemplative Pedagogy special interest group of the POD Network in Higher Education).

At contemplativemind.org, there is a diverse tree of 30 types of contemplative practices (spanning seven groupings) to draw from and they range in how much preparation or experience is needed to introduce them. Very basic contemplative activities can be done with little preparation. For example, Yoder and Cotler (2011) suggested having students do stretching and breathing exercises at their seats to increase their performance

on exams or to manage the classroom after interruptions or conflicts. A related technique that can be a natural next step is mindfulness meditation. Wolcott (2013) noted how mindfulness meditation, whose goal is to “sit still and notice whatever unfolds, without judgment” (p. 86) is one of several types of meditation, and is probably the type of contemplative practice that is the most common and most studied. Wolcott also discusses the recent critical mass of medical and neuroscientific research (Tang, Hölzel, & Posner, 2015) supporting the use of meditation to address pain, depression, and stress.

Towards an Application in Statistics

Visualizations to help students reduce anxiety and succeed in mathematics can be found in books over two decades old such as Arem (1993). It became not uncommon for some mathematics instructors to use some type of mindfulness activity during a class meeting. Over the ensuing years, enough of a critical mass of interest and practitioners formed to support a full day’s worth of talks at the nation’s largest meeting for university mathematics professors. The 2016 Joint Mathematics Meetings featured six hours of “Contemplative Pedagogy and Mathematics” talks organized by Luke Wolcott and Justin Brody with this call for proposals:

Contemplative pedagogy aims to incorporate contemplative/ introspective practices into the classroom in order to deepen the educational experience. Students are challenged to engage more fully with the material and their experience of learning. Common techniques include in-class mindfulness activities, deep listening or dialoguing, journaling, and beholding. As more and more data comes in showing the efficacy and benefits of such practices in all aspects of life, the Contemplative Education movement has been gaining momentum, strengthening connections with established good pedagogy, and expanding to departments outside the humanities and social sciences.

At the sessions, Brody (2016) reported on his use of an analytic meditation technique called *vipashyana* (in which the goal is to observe one's thoughts as they are) in a first-year seminar course to contemplate the mathematical infinite. Increasing the nuance of one's concept of the extraordinary nature of the mathematical infinite may parallel an increased openness to observing one's thoughts and struggles for what they are without being quick to rely on preconceptions or expectations. Brody's course explored the infinite in set theory, logic, and philosophy, with three culminating examples that we will now briefly note. Cantor's Theorem says that the size (or cardinality) of the set of all subsets of a given set is larger than that given set, which means there are different sizes of infinite sets! Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem says that any formal system rich enough to do basic arithmetic is necessarily "incomplete" in that the language of the system is capable of making statements which cannot be proved or disproved within the system. Zeno's paradoxes involve an infinite process of dividing time or space, such as claiming that Achilles can never overtake the tortoise (who had a slight head start in the race) because by the time Achilles catches up to where the tortoise was, the tortoise must have covered some further distance during that time interval. In the analytic meditation, students would be given a short phrase like "The set of rational numbers has the same cardinality as the set of natural numbers", repeat it to themselves, contemplate it, and then rest their minds. Brody (2016) intended for the meditation to help students not only deeply understand particular concepts of infinity but also see interconnections among them and also to stay focused and engaged on the topic even when confused (which naturally happens when exploring the deep and often paradoxical nature of the infinite). He reported that results were promising though he felt the meditation did not seem to work well with the other parts of the course, including assigned daily sitting.

Cutting across specific content areas of mathematics, some math students are not always careful with respect to detail, assumptions, or checking answers for reasonableness. Such students may experience homework as a string of unrelated exercises without seeing the bigger picture from which they

come and with which they can be approached. The opposite of this would be students who are mindful and who do their work with reflectiveness, awareness and attention. Mason (1998) noted that there are multiple levels of attention, as one can be focused on a task at hand and at the same time have peripheral attention about connections to patterns, other topics, or experiences. In particular, he articulates three levels of awareness: awareness in action (in which students act in the material world), awareness in discipline (in which students are able to describe their methods and habits of thought), and awareness in counsel (in which students reach the additional level of knowledge required to be an effective teacher of the subject).

The discipline of statistics uses mathematics but is no mere branch of mathematics – it is its own science and some things play out differently in statistics than in mathematics such as the role of context (which provides meaning in statistics, but obscures abstract structure in mathematics; Cobb & Moore, 1997). While the author is aware of (and will shortly note) some individuals who practice contemplative pedagogy and statistics, he is not aware of any prior published books or articles on this specific intersection, and this was part of the motivation (along with other inspirations noted shortly) to write the present paper. Though Wolcott (2013) noted that mathematics and the hard sciences are underrepresented in contemplative pedagogy, statistics is arguably an ideal candidate for greater representation for several reasons:

- (1) statistics encourages an academic mindfulness by checking assumptions (e.g., normality, independence, constant probability, constant variance, linearity, etc.) rather than taking them for granted: “Imagine if reflecting on process was part of your process.” (Wolcott, 2013, p. 92);
- (2) the challenge of stepping back from one’s own thoughts or ego that meditation encourages may not be unlike the challenge Wild (2006) describes of understanding the abstractness of a sampling distribution, the challenge Kolbert (2017) discusses of suspending judgment so as to avoid confirmation bias, or the challenge Lesser (2010) describes of making accurate assessments of

- probabilities in the face of one's personal interests or experiences or one's tendency not to see oneself as an arbitrary member of a population;
- (3) statistics acknowledges uncertainty rather than pretending it can be eliminated or ignored, and such matter of fact acceptance of the inherent imperfection, incompleteness, or messiness of real life data may align well with the stance of the nonjudgmental observation and acceptance that mindfulness encourages.
 - (4) Statistics class is an environment to which many students arrive with anxiety (Chew & Dillon, 2014; Lesser, 2014; Onwuegbuzie & Wilson, 2003) and there are even discipline-specific validated instruments to measure this such as the Statistical Anxiety Rating Scale (STARS) and the Statistics Anxiety Measure (SAM). This documented anxiety is an opportunity that can arguably be at least partially addressed with tools that support a student's metacognitive awareness or intervention. A possible precedent is the technique of Ayers-Nachamkin (1992) called *thought stopping*: "When a student finds herself thinking negatively about her ability to do statistics, she is to say aloud and firmly 'stop!' and then engage in telling herself positive things such as 'I can understand this; if I take it one step at a time, it will become clear'" (p. 88).

Indeed, there are notable examples of statistics educators with the vision and passion to make natural connections between meditation and their academic training. The American Statistical Association's then-president Jessica Utts (2016) interviewed Dr. Monica Dabos, a California community college associate professor who is active in the national statistics education community and whose background also includes a 15-year stint as a monk and leading multi-day retreats that include meditation. Dabos says her work on meditation is what most affects her teaching, motivating her to be introspective, maintain balance, be open to change, and cultivate empathy for her students' struggles. Another college statistics professor who now teaches meditation and mindfulness is Dr. Joy Jordan (formerly at Lawrence University), who has won awards for her teaching.

She states, “Statistics is the science of data....Meditation is the science of ourselves. I think of meditation as an experimental lab where we learn about thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations (and their relation to each other). Our own experience is the best teacher. We just need to pay attention.” (Dane & Jordan, 2017). Dr. Dana Keller (2006), a statistician who has explored Eastern philosophies for several decades, offers contemplative-flavored insights such as: “Statistics are filters on how we see the world. They focus our vision and they help us to see through the fog....This journey is best experienced in comfortable clothing, in a favorite chair, and in a quiet space....Mostly, one acquires a growing sense of wonderment at the patterns and relationships that emerge from the chaos” (pp. x, xi).

Developing an Example of Mindfulness for a Statistical Literacy Course

The author appreciates teaching at an institution whose campus includes a 20-foot diameter labyrinth, a replica of a *Ihakhang*, and a contemplative garden (with plants, flowers, overhead lattice shade, and walls centered around a cooling drip fountain in which droplets fall onto bell-shaped resonators and then into a still pool held in a large copper pan). Having a departmental colleague with a mindfulness practice, having taken a meditation adult education course as a graduate student, and having recently attended mindfulness workshops at national conferences within and beyond his discipline, the author was inspired to try some form of contemplative practice in his spring 2017 statistical literacy course, a course taken by many pre-service elementary school teachers as a requirement as well as by a comparable number of students with varied other majors as a way to fulfill core curriculum requirements.

Mindful of the idea that language and setup can affect how well introducing a class to a new approach is received (e.g., the “Working in Environments without Precedent” section of Lesser, 2007), the author chose the more secular-sounding word “mindfulness” rather than “meditation,” chose a brief amount of time (90 seconds) for the silent meditation, and had a meditation prompt or script (see Appendix A) that connects to specific statistics content. The latter connection was inspired generally by the author’s experience (Lesser, 2016) using conceptual

analogies in statistics education and specifically by the analogy of one's center remaining stable in the face of something astray.

In statistics, there are multiple ways of measuring and modeling the center of a dataset, each with its distinctive properties, strengths, and limitations (e.g., Lesser, Wagler, & Abormegah, 2014). When a dataset has significant outliers (e.g., annual household incomes), a much more representative value to summarize the dataset will be the *median* (the value in the middle in the list of sorted values) rather than the *mean* (the sum of the values divided by the number of values). To make this concrete, imagine {50, 65, 65, 80} to be a dataset of university employee salaries (in thousands of dollars) and verify that by inserting an outlier value of 500 (the football coach?), the mean dramatically rises to 152, but the median does not change. Therefore, this aspect of the script works on two levels – giving students a conceptual analogy to reinforce statistics content and giving students a way to visualize an aspect of contemplative practice that can help them increase calmness and awareness and decrease any anxiety associated with learning statistics.

Interestingly, during the February 15, 2017 class meeting, the topic of mindfulness meditation was broached naturally by discussing the case study “Can Meditation Improve Test Scores?” in our course textbook (Utts, 2015, pp. 121-124), which illustrates random assignment when doing an experiment and was based on a cited *New York Times* blog and journal article (Mrazek et al., 2013). To further bolster student buy-in, the author incorporated a reference to this into the first sentence of the script. An example (5.1) and Appendix News Story (1) of the course textbook (Utts, 2015) provided a news story that summarized a mindfulness meditation study reported by Kotansky (2003). To further bolster student buy-in, the author incorporated a reference to this into the first sentence of the script. Another unplanned connection to the topic occurred at the May 1, 2017 class meeting when student teams presented results of their projects in which they collected and analyzed data on a topic they chose. One team had chosen to do a survey regarding student stress and the ensuing discussion yielded a student mentioning how unusual and how helpful it was when one of her instructors opened class with a mindfulness meditation. These prior reference points and exposures to the

idea of mindfulness or meditation gave the author further confidence that the class was “ready” to engage in a contemplative activity and would not find it strange.

The author chose to implement the mindfulness meditation activity within the first five minutes of an 80-minute class meeting on May 3, 2017 and give a survey (Appendix B) at the end of that class meeting about their experience. The survey was anonymous so students would feel free to answer honestly. This date (the last meeting before finals week) was chosen because the author assumed it would likely be a high-stress day for students with the grade pressure and deadlines that occur near the end of any school year and with the particular focus of this last regular class meeting on reviewing for the course final exam one week away.

Results

Of the 22 students present that day (of the 28 enrolled in the course), no one left the room to opt out of the activity and no one opted out of taking the survey. Survey results are presented below:

Table 1: Likert-item responses from end-of-class survey taken by ($n = 22$) students

Survey Statement	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
The mindfulness experience was interesting.	1	0	1	6	14
I appreciated that the mindfulness reading made connections to statistics content.	1	0	2	7	12
I would like to experience a mindfulness experience again.	1	0	1	8	12
The mindfulness experience made my anxiety lower than it would have been for this class period.	1	0	4	7	10
The mindfulness experience helped	1	1	4	10	6

increase my focus or concentration for the rest of the class period.					
--	--	--	--	--	--

It did not seem compelling to conduct and report a formal comprehensive statistical analysis on the quantitative data because (1) the sample size is modest, (2) the intervention was a one-time event, and (3) the (very positive) pattern of each item’s responses is quite clear from a simple visual inspection of Table 1. It should be noted that all five instances of “strongly disagree” came from one individual survey sheet and that person’s comment in the narrative section was positive (“Really helps me destress and refocus”), making the author wonder if that lone “outlier” student confused “strongly disagree” with “strongly agree” while speedily completing the survey.

The survey also asked about students’ prior experiences with a mindfulness activity. Of the 15 students who reported previously experiencing a mindfulness activity, 10 had done so in a classroom setting (with 3 of those 10 in a mathematics or statistics class). The level of prior experience was slightly negatively correlated with responses to each of the five items, meaning that those who had more prior experience tended to give somewhat lower ratings of the activity than did those with less prior experience. That said, none of those slight negative correlations were at a level that was statistically significant -- that is, the amount of correlation was well within the window of variability one might expect when there is no true underlying correlation. (That said, perhaps a slight trend towards negative correlation would be unsurprising if we would expect a bigger reaction from those for whom this was a more novel or new experience, or expect a smaller reaction from those who are used to meditating for much longer intervals.)

Beyond the fixed-choice items reported above, there was an open-ended narrative prompt: “Feel free to give any comments or feedback you may have”. The responses from the nine students who did not leave this item blank were all positive: “I liked the chime”, “chime was relaxing ☺”, “loved it!”, “Really helps me destress and refocus”, “I liked that you mentioned statistics terms at the end”, “I love the way doctor lesser tried to connect the mindfulness activity with stats by mentioning

correlation and outliers!!!”, “This was great! Thank you! 😊”, “Thanks for caring so much about your class! Best ‘MATH’ teacher”, and “The mindfulness experience was very relaxing and helpful during these stressful weeks. It helped remind me to do that before any finals when I’m stressing.” It is interesting how some responses noted a very specific detail (e.g., the chime) while responses such as the last one included reflecting on use beyond the current course.

Discussion

This first experience was encouraging for the author and inspired questions for how to do contemplative practices in future semesters. For example, the choice of the last class meeting was a natural choice for a one-time use because the need to lower anxiety was likely to be near its peak and because the class had already covered content that could connect to and normalize the activity. It is not clear in general what would be optimal scheduling for implementation throughout an entire semester so as to encourage a consistent practice, beyond days of highest anxiety. And implementation suitable for an introductory statistical literacy class may need to be modified for upper division or graduate classes in statistics if higher-level content connections are desired and if the proportion of students with anxiety may be different. Also, it is not clear how much prior experience the instructor (and students) would need for the instructor to not read from a fixed script and instead comfortably improvise the activity in the moment or participate along with the class by using one of the many meditation timers or pre-recorded scripts freely available online. The author considered (but did not, out of concern about how much class time would be used) preceding the script with additional minutes of guided stretching and wonders if that extra segment would have further facilitated students paying attention to their bodies and releasing tension. To be able to readily offer more (forms of) contemplative practice in the classroom, the author believes it will be helpful to first spend more time experiencing them himself, by attending workshops and by cultivating a more regular personal practice. Towards this end, the author recently attended a mindfulness

workshop on his campus and began a “Mindful Healing” month-long online course taught by Joy Jordan.

Beyond his future pedagogical choices as an individual, the author is also curious about bigger picture questions that the discipline might explore about the use of contemplative practices in teaching statistics. Mindfulness or meditation activities can include developing awareness of one’s body by paying attention to breath and where there is (or was) tension. It may therefore be interesting to explore whether such an approach especially resonates with statistics students who learn well with kinesthetic activities such as paper wad tossing (Morrell & Auer, 2007), human histograms (Joiner, 1975; Schilling, Watkins, & Watkins, 2002), or random walks (Kaplan, 2009).

It may also be worthwhile to see if including moments of silent contemplation at the beginning of class can shift the general perception of silence in the classroom so that whenever an instructor gives a nontrivial amount of “wait time” (see, Gibbons, 1998; Rowe, 1986) after posing a question, the silence remains comfortable for students and the instructor. Perhaps moments of silence will remind students that they have the choice to be present rather than passive during class meeting time, and that the class is truly a community, not just a teacher talking. And from the statistics perspective, perhaps there is an analogy between letting the students’ voices be heard and letting the data “speak” rather than a professor steering everything towards methods or conclusions already in mind.

Perhaps moments of slowing down will yield a clarifying simplicity of statistical concepts, in the spirit of how Keller (2006) uses verse and graphics to give us a qualitative journey through statistics. This also seems consistent with the “less is more” advocacy of Moore (1992): “Almost any statistics course can be improved by more emphasis on data and on concepts at the expense of less theory and fewer recipes” (p. 20). As several progressive educators have quipped, our job is not to “cover the material” but to *uncover* it. Perhaps the nonjudgmental attitude (i.e., not worrying about whether one is doing the technique perfectly, not worrying if one stays completely free of tension or stray thoughts) required by meditation (e.g., Benson & Klipper, 2000) will help reduce many students’ fixation on failure, perfection or grades (Burger, 2012). Perhaps encouraging more

space between stimulus and response can help statistics students be more reflective before they claim that a correlation is a causal relationship or that probability outcomes are all equally likely.

This example may encourage more exploration of mindfulness experiences tailored to the discipline taught. Perhaps a philosophy professor would connect “center” to Aristotle’s golden mean. Perhaps a physiology professor would facilitate awareness of breath with more anatomical specificity. Perhaps an educational psychology professor would find a way to make connections to metacognition, anxiety, stress, or learning theory. And perhaps, as hinted by the one-time bell curve reference near the end of the script, a statistics professor will find further ways to make content connections. After all, practitioners of statistics and contemplative practices alike must model how to inhabit uncertainty – not to deny it, but to observe it, describe it, and engage it.

Post-Script

In his fall 2017 statistics literacy classes, the author was moved to choose a different day to debut this activity: the first class meeting **after** the Las Vegas mass shooting. The worst mass shooting in modern US history created a backdrop of high anxiety for students, and when the author offered the option of having a mindfulness meditation activity to help address it, the class eagerly agreed with no one exercising the option offered to opt out by stepping into the hall. As did the students in the previous semester, students committed to the experience by closing their eyes, following the relaxation instructions without signs of restlessness and the energy was calmer afterwards.

References

- Arem, C. A. (1993). *Conquering math anxiety: A self-help workbook*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Ayers-Nachamkin, B. (1992). A feminist approach to the introductory statistics course. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 20(1& 2), 86-94.
- Barbezat, D. P., & Bush, M. (2014). *Contemplative practices in higher education: Powerful methods to transform teaching and learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Benson, H., & Klipper, M. Z. (2000). *The relaxation response* (revised ed.). New York: HarperCollins.
- Brody, J. (2016). Contemplating infinity. Paper presented at the Joint Mathematics Meetings, Seattle, WA.
- Burger, E. (2012, August 21). Teaching to fail. *Inside Higher Ed*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2012/08/21/essay-importance-teaching-failure>
- Chew, P. K. H., & Dillon, D. B. (2014). Statistics anxiety update: Refining the construct and recommendations for a new research agenda. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 9(2), 196–208.
- Cobb, G. W., & Moore, D. S. (1997). Mathematics, statistics, and teaching. *American Mathematics Monthly*, 104(9), 801-823.
- Dane, J., & Jordan, J. (2017, February 22). Interview of Joy Jordan. <http://riverandbay.com/dispatch-from-midlife/>
- Gardner, H. (2011). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences* (3rd ed.). New York: Basic Books.
- Gibbons, P. (1998). Classroom talk and the learning of new registers in a second language. *Language and Education*, 12(2), 99-118.
- Joiner, B. L. (1975). Living histograms. *International Statistical Review*, 3, 339-340.
- Kaplan, D. (2009). Taking your class for a walk... randomly. Webinar for Consortium of the Advancement of Undergraduate Statistics Education. <https://www.causeweb.org/cause/webinar/activity/2009-10/>
- Keller, D. K. (2006). *The Tao of statistics: A path to understanding (with no math)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kolbert, E. (2017, February 27). Why facts don't change our minds. *The New Yorker*. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/02/27/why-facts-dont-change-our-minds>
- Kotansky, H. (Nov. 2003). Mending mindfully. *Yoga Journal*, p. 35.
- Lesser, L. (2016). More statistics education literature on analogies. *The American Statistician*, 70(4), 434.
- Lesser, L. (2014). Overcoming statistical anxiety and being successful in data analysis. In Amanda J. Rockinson-Szapkiw & Lucinda S. Spaulding (Eds.), *Navigating the doctoral journey: A handbook of strategies for success* (pp. 65-75). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Lesser, L. (2010). Equity and the increasingly diverse tertiary student population: Challenges and opportunities in statistics education. In C. Reading (Ed.), *Data and context in statistics education: Towards an evidence-based society. Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference on Teaching Statistics*. Ljubljana, Slovenia. Voorburg, The Netherlands: International Statistical Institute. http://iase-web.org/documents/papers/icots8/ICOTS8_3G3_LESSER.pdf

- Lesser, L. (2007). Critical values and transforming data: Teaching statistics with social justice. *Journal of Statistics Education*, 15(1), 1-21.
<http://ww2.amstat.org/publications/jse/v15n1/lesser.pdf>
- Lesser, L., Wagler, A., & Abormegah, P. (2014). Finding a happy median: Another balance representation for measures of center. *Journal of Statistics Education*, 22(3), 1-28.
<http://ww2.amstat.org/publications/jse/v22n3/lesser.pdf>
- Mason, J. (1998). Enabling teachers to be real teachers: Necessary levels of awareness and structure of attention. *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education*, 1(3), 243-267.
- Moore, D. S. (1992). Teaching statistics as a respectable subject. In Florence & Sheldon Gordon (Eds.), *Statistics for the twenty-first century* (pp. 14-25). Washington, DC: Mathematical Association of America.
- Morrell, C. H., & Auer, R. E. (2007). Trashball: A logistic regression classroom activity. *Journal of Statistics Education*, 15(1), 1-18.
<http://ww2.amstat.org/publications/jse/v15n1/morrell.pdf>.
- Mrazek, M. D., Franklin, M. S., Phillips, D. T., Baird, B., & Schooler, J. W. (2013). Mindfulness training improves working memory capacity and GRE performance while reducing mind wandering. *Psychological Science*, 24(5), 776-781.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Wilson, V. A. (2003). Statistics anxiety: Nature, etiology, antecedents, effects, and treatments – A comprehensive review of the literature. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 8(2), 195-209.
- Rowe, M. B. (1986). Wait time: Slowing down may be a way of speeding up! *Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(1), 43-50.
- Schilling, M. F., Watkins, A. E., & Watkins, W. (2002). Is human height bimodal? *The American Statistician*, 56(3), 223-229.
- Tang, Y.-Y., Hölzel, B. K., & Posner, M. I. (2015). The neuroscience of mindfulness meditation. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 16(4), 213-225.
- Utts, J. M. (2015). *Seeing through statistics* (4th ed.). Stamford, CT: Cengage.
- Utts, J. M. (2016). How a salsa-dancing former monk from Argentina is instilling confidence and wonder in her statistics students. *Amstat News*, no. 470, 3-5. Also online at: <http://magazine.amstat.org/blog/2016/08/01/prescorner-aug16/>
- Wild, C. (2006). The concept of distribution. *Statistics Education Research Journal*, 5(2), 10-26.
- Wolcott, F. L. (2013). On contemplation in mathematics. *Journal of Humanistic Mathematics*, 3(1), 74-95. <http://scholarship.claremont.edu/jhm/vol3/iss1/7/>
- Yoder, R., & Cotler, J. (2011). Teaching mindfulness in the college classroom. *The Teaching Professor*, 25(3), 1, 5.

Appendix A

Script for Statistics Mindfulness Meditation Activity

As we saw in a case study in Chapter 6 of our textbook, one way to reduce blood pressure and stress hormone levels as well as increase focus is mindfulness meditation or relaxation response. The next few minutes will be a short voluntary experience that you are invited to participate in only as fully as you feel comfortable. Basically, you'll have a couple of minutes of paying attention to your body and your breath you hear a reading, and then we'll observe 90 seconds of silence that starts and ends with the sound of a chime.

There's no hypnosis, no theology, and of course, no grade. The only requirement is that, for the next few minutes, you (and any devices) remain quiet and not disturb others, or right now you may instead go into the hall and I'll come tell you when we're done.

[after no students elected to step out, I dimmed the lights and began the reading over some soft relaxation music played from an online source]

Keep your back straight, but not rigid. Be relaxed, but not leaning against the back of the chair. Feel your feet resting flat on the floor. Let your hands rest where they are comfortable – whether on your desk or on your thighs. When you find a comfortable position that you can maintain for a few minutes, you may gently close your eyes --or, if you prefer, you may keep them open with a soft focus.

Take slow, deep relaxed breaths – through your nose if you can. Bring your awareness into your body. Notice, but don't worry about, where any tension in your body is distributed. Observe where you tend to hold the most tension, and let it go.

You can replace all the noise and variation in your thoughts with a single stable value – your center – like the median. Stray thoughts are like outliers that you can notice and let go – so that they do not affect your center.

It is powerful to experience that we can notice something but not immediately react, and this can inspire us to improve our life habits. Your mind likes to have something to do, so it helps to have it focus on your breath.

With each in breath, silently count 1-2-3-4 and on each out breath, silently count 1-2-3-4.

When your mind wanders--which it will--be compassionate do not judge yourself for this, just notice, and gently return to focusing on your breath and the count. And just keep doing that as we begin 90 seconds of silence which begins now with the sound of a chime.

[I stopped the music, struck with a mallet a long-sustaining suspended energy chime bar, timed 90 seconds of silence with my watch, struck the chime again, and then finished the reading]

Like the tail of a bell curve, the sound fades below what we can hear, but never dies. And as you gently open your eyes, you can continue to feel connection to your center, your center that -- like the median-- keeps its place, keeping you focused and grounded in your breath, in peace, and in openness to learning about yourself and about the world.

APPENDIX B

Anonymous Post-Survey for Statistics Mindfulness Activity

1. Before today, had you experienced a mindfulness activity in any setting? YES NO
2. Before today, had you experienced a mindfulness reading in any classroom setting? YES NO
3. Before today, had you experienced a mindfulness reading in a math or statistics class? YES NO

For each statement, circle your level of agreement or disagreement with that statement.

4. The mindfulness experience was interesting.
strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
5. I appreciated that the mindfulness reading made connections to statistics content.
strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
6. I would like to experience a mindfulness experience again.
strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
7. The mindfulness experience made my anxiety lower than it would have been for this class period.
strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
8. The mindfulness experience helped increase my focus or concentration for the rest of the class period.
strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

Feel free to give any comments, feedback, or questions you may have:

“We are human”: Using Contemplative Practice in a Black Studies Class after Philando Castile

Maria Hamilton Abegunde
Chare' A. Smith
Ryan Lucas
Moniel Sanders
Indiana University—Bloomington

Abstract

*This paper reflects on how using the contemplative practice of Lectio Divina (Divine Reading) in my Black Studies class one month after the shooting of Philando Castile in July 2016 led to personal and lasting transformations for members of our learning community. As part of my teaching, I encouraged students to use a humane insight framework and to engage with the concept of quiet while reading **Between the World and Me** (Coates 2015) to contemplate what it meant to be human. In keeping with the practice of Black Studies, which acknowledges the importance and necessity of communities to theorize and analyze their own experiences, I invited three students to write about this process with me so that they could mindfully interpret and make meaning of their active roles as part of our learning community and to reflect on the short and long term impact of what we accomplished.*

Introduction

One does not often say contemplative practice and activism in the same breath. On the surface, they are antithetical: the former is perceived as only meditation; the latter as only resistance. In addition, one does not always imagine the academy as a place where contemplative practices can—or should—be introduced to emerging scholar-activists. This paper shows that when contemplative practice and activism are

integrated into a class they can be tools or sites of transformation for instructor and students.

Until recently, research on the impact of contemplative practices has been limited. However, Barbezat and Bush (2014) described strategies for incorporating meditation and introspection into the academy. They argue that these strategies help students reduce stress and help them to develop intellectual inquiry, creative approaches to scholarship, analytical skills, empathy for others, and personal insight into their research. They also help them reflect on the relationship between their personal and professional lives. In addition, contemplative pedagogy and research in this area have not yet fully addressed the joys and challenges of working with diverse students (Kanagla & Rendon, 2017) or social justice issues (Petty, 2017).

Using the contemplative practice of reflection, this paper will share what happened when I implemented the *Lectio Divina* in Contemporary Issues in the African American Community (A263), my undergraduate African American and African Diaspora Studies (Black Studies) seminar. Of the eleven students, seven identified as African American, and one each as African, White, Latina, and Asian. I taught the course twice a week the fall of 2016, one month after the shooting of Philando Castile in July, and following a year of student activism on campus in response to national and local racial violence.

As a student-centered Black Studies scholar I adhere to the practice of creating opportunities for individuals and communities to theorize and analyze their own experiences. I, therefore, invited Chare'A Smith, Ryan Lucas, and Moniel Sanders, three students from that learning community, to contribute to this article.

Contemplative Practices

Definitions of contemplative practices vary; they include activities such as introspection, meditation, reflection, silence, and visualization. When incorporated into pedagogical practices, they help students to focus their attention internally as well as to engage with their assignments (Barbezat, 2014). The Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education provides a tree to guide those interested in learning more about the types of practices that are possible.

For example, one may utilize meditation at the beginning or end of a class to encourage students to focus on the work they are about to do or to consider what they learned. If one adds reflection to the class, she can use questions to help students delve into specific ideas that highlight course goals. Consistent use of contemplative practices can lead students to make inquiries into their own thinking and the motives for that thinking. It can also inspire them to connect with their learning community in unforeseen ways and with a high level of compassion that has been developed through ongoing dialogue.

Humane Insight

Overall, contemplative practices heighten our senses and how we use them; they help us become mindful about how we interact with the world around us. As pedagogical tools, they can help us develop our abilities to listen, speak, feel, and see our texts and each other differently. In August 2016, members of our A263 learning community needed to see themselves, each other, and the world through different lenses. Two years after Michael Brown, Jr.'s death in Missouri, we experienced the death of Philando Castile of Falcon Heights, Minnesota. Between them, Sandra Bland of Waller County Texas, Alton Sterling of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and many others were killed. Additionally there were verbal and physical attacks against our own students.

I designed my course to discuss racial violence, issues such as education and beauty, and the historical contexts that shaped them. Knowing that students may have been directly impacted by similar violence, I wanted to create a course where dialogue, reflection, and introspection were key elements each time we met as a learning community. Although I knew this might lead us away from the text, I also knew that the text would propel us towards a greater question: in these troubled times, how would we learn to live with and love one another as human beings?

This intentional approach of focusing on the humanity of those who are suffering, or humane insight (Baker, 2015), is key to incorporating contemplative practices in Black Studies. Baker argues that this theoretical framework and practice of seeing helps us retain the subjectivity and humanness of the person we are viewing. She writes:

...humane insight seeks knowledge about the humanity of that person. It is an ethics—based look that imagines the body that is seen to merit the protections due to all human bodies. Humane insight describes a decision to identify the body being looked at as a human body, a gesture that is integral to the formation of our social interactions. It is a look that turns a benevolent eye, recognizes violations of human dignity, and bestows or articulates the desire for actual protection. (p. 5)

Given the polarizing local and national discussions about police shootings, race, and the 2016 presidential campaign, humane insight became a form of activism in our class—intentional, compassionate, confrontational, oppositional—to challenge the violence against and violent images of Black people, especially Black men. It was the answer to my question: how could I create an environment in which discussion did not lead to objectification of enslaved Africans, their descendants, Castile, my students, and their lives?

Learning Outcomes

I designed the A263 learning outcomes before July. As class approached, I became hyper—conscious that in the weeks before our first meeting students would have seen images of more Black people being killed. I did not want to avoid talking about these deaths. I wanted, however, to minimize re—traumatizing us and to reach beyond “the black body” in pain and death to make it possible for us to contemplate the wholeness of Black people.

The learning outcomes for my class, therefore, included a section on intercultural and/or civic knowledge taken directly from the College of Arts and Sciences Learning Outcomes & Course Characteristics for general education. To meet the college’s goals, I wanted students to be able to answer the following questions at the end of the semester: What new knowledge are your learning about African American history and culture? How does it help us become more socially conscious of the issues that the African American community faces? How

does this knowledge help us create solutions that improve the future of African American communities?

The outcomes also included a section on contemplative engagement and practice that informed students that we would use teaching and learning methods that encouraged us to engage deeply with our texts, their authors, and ourselves through several ways, including but not limited to: active listening (discussion and dialogue), deep viewing (art work), reading out loud (selected texts), writing (weekly assignments). I suggested to students that teaching and learning in this way meant we would co—create solutions that promoted social justice for our local, national, and global communities.

Quiet

In addition to the questions I posed in the outcomes, I asked students to be still and think about the change they wanted to be in the world. I was not asking them to be silent, which can be interpreted and felt as imposed, oppressive, or a response/resistance to an external event. I was asking them to be quiet. This was an important distinction in a Black Studies class. Black people and their lives were always seen as something “extra” and in resistance to something, or as Quashie (2012) wrote, “expressive, dramatic, or loud” (p. 3). Black people were not often afforded the interiority that other people were given. Quashie argues, however, that this interiority, this quiet, can be found even in the moment of Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the 1968 Olympics (pg. 1—3).

Quiet, Quashie writes, is far from being motionless and silent. It is instead “... a metaphor for the full range of one’s inner life—one’s desires, ambitions, hungers, vulnerabilities, fears. ... It is a simple, beautiful part of what it means to be alive. It is already there, if one is looking to understand it” (p. 6). If this quiet, this fullness of life, was already there for us to look at, how could we see it beyond the horrific images that had been presented to many of us in the past two years?

The Text and the Practice

We would answer all these questions by reading out loud excerpts from *Between the World and Me* (Coates 2015), a book Coates wrote for his son after Brown’s killer was not indicted. In

the book, modeled on the letter that James Baldwin wrote to his nephew in *The Fire Next Time* (1963), Coates reflects on his upbringing, the fear and burden of being a Black man, and race relations in the United States. I chose this book because Coates had visited our campus the year before and students were discussing it as they struggled with local and national racial violence. The book offered an opportunity to guide students through a difficult topic while simultaneously leaving room for and containing their emotions.

I wanted this assignment to be completed in class and without a written task. Reading the book had to be a ritual. The contemplative practice I chose, therefore, had to allow students to speak, hear, and embody the author's words as their own and it had to leave space for them to listen to themselves and each other: The *Lectio Divina* (Divine Reading). This practice is used to read scripture as a way of communicating with God and to release one's attachment to the outcome. However, as I learned from Dr. Rose Sackey—Milligan, the *Lectio Divina* can be applied to any text. It had been Dr. Sackey—Milligan who introduced me to this practice during a workshop reading of Frederick Douglass' "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July" at the Association of Contemplative Mind in Higher Education summer 2016 institute.

In the *Lectio Divina*, an individual or group reads excerpts of a selected text. This is followed by reflection on the text that may include a response such as a word or phrase. The reading and responses continue for a specified time. The process ends with dialogue about the reading and what each person experienced. In this way, the text can be read ritualistically, mindfulness can be applied to the acts of reading, speaking, and listening, and one's experiences – internally and externally — cannot be denied or ignored.

We began the book on October 17th. Although students read the entire text at home, I selected excerpts from parts one and two to be read over our two days together. On the first day we each read an excerpt. Afterwards, I asked us to respond with one word before we began a second round. The timidity with which students approached the assignment was to be expected. We had only been together for eight weeks. No one, including myself, had read the book out loud.

Prior to reading from the book on our second day, I suggested to students that they read their excerpts as if they were reading to an audience; that they allow their voices to give meaning to how they were feeling as they read the words on the page. As had been the case with the assignments so far, students were willing to do what was necessary to deepen their experiences. The readings on the second day were markedly different than the first. Their voices were louder, stronger, laden with emotion they had repressed since returning to campus. But, there were more pauses and silences. I kept my eyes down so no one felt I was staring at them. And I listened carefully to our breathing.

The Students

The *Lectio Divina* encourages an individual to focus on his or her feelings or response without commentary from anyone. The quiet between readings allows the weight of the text to settle. The quiet between responses validates a person's perspective without attempts to change it. Both help us understand how we interpret a text, opening the space for dialogue about the similarities or differences in our experiences. As I participated in this process with the students I observed them support each other when crying, speaking about how hard the practice was, acknowledging the shifts that were happening, and sharing their realities. We had started the semester as strangers reading *The Mis—education of the Negro* (Woodson 1933) and visited the Framing Beauty exhibit that featured the first Kehinde Wiley painting any of us had ever seen. Students had seen me cry when talking about visiting South Sudan. I had seen them angry after campus protests.

The responses of three students remained with me long after the semester ended. I invited Smith, Lucas, and Sanders to contribute their reflections because their poignant experiences represented what was possible when doing this work. I have titled their reflections with the words they spoke in response to Coates. I'd like to suggest to the reader that you approach the writings below using the *Lectio Divina* process. First: acknowledge how difficult it must have been for undergraduates to trust each other. Second: Read each section out loud. Pay attention to how they sound, the words students chose, how you

feel. Ask yourself, how do their experiences help you understand what it means to be human? To be Black?

I have placed their narratives here because stories are like this: they emerge and erupt when and where you least expect. In a classroom, the path towards success can be outlined but not controlled. The *Lectio Divina* process allows us to honor the course structure and the moments when students recognize their lives as part of a larger historical narrative at any point in time.

**“Professor Abegunde, This is too Deep Right Now.”
Chare’A Smith.**

One year after Ta Nahesi Coates was a keynote speaker at Indiana University I found myself reading *Between the World and Me* (2015) for Contemporary Social Issues in the African American Community (A263). Professor Abegunde posed two questions to make our learning relevant, personal, and interactive: What are you willing to live for? What are you willing to die for? And, as part of our final project, she asked us to finish the phrase “In a world where Black lives matter, I imagine....” (BlackLivesMatter). The answer to these questions would become clear only as we mindfully constructed a response that was true to ourselves. For me, these questions would cease being academic very quickly.

Two weeks before reading Coates for the first time, I logged onto Facebook to see my cousin Shakey’s face plastered across status updates and people asking us to pray for the family. My family. I stared in disbelief as I read a Fox Chicago article outlining the details of his death. He had been murdered that morning on the way to work; his brother was in critical condition after being shot four times. No one had called me. I picked up the phone and frantically called everyone at home. Was it true? Are you sure? They confirmed it was.

What had happened? My cousin was killed as part of a gang initiation, one in which a group must stand in the middle of a residential street and block a driver from continuing down the road. If the driver blows his horn or objects, the gang member must shoot and kill the person. My cousin needed the gang to move so he wouldn’t be late to work. He died at the scene: eight gunshots, two of which pierced his throat. He was not in a gang.

I had never before read a book out loud with other people. We took turns, pausing and taking breaths when we couldn't read anymore, placing emphasis where we saw fit. We read with tears in our eyes. It wasn't just the words and imagery. In eight weeks we had become aware of the world around us through assignments that made us reflect on what we saw, heard, read, wrote, and felt. It all led to intense emotion, understanding, and new perspectives in the classroom. When it was my turn to read, this was my excerpt:

The boy with the small eyes reached into his ski Jacket and pulled out a gun. I recall it in the slowest motion as though in a dream. There the boy stood, with the gun brandished, which he slowly untucked, tucked, then untucked once more, and in his small eyes I saw a surging rage that could, in an instant, erase my body. That was 1968. That year I felt myself drowning in the news reports of murder. I was aware that these murders very often did not land upon the intended targets but fell upon great— aunts, PTA mothers, overtime uncles, and joyful children— fell upon them random and relentless, like great sheets of rain. I knew this in theory but could not understand it as fact until the boy with the small eyes stood across from me holding my entire body in his small hands. The boy did not shoot. His friends pulled him back. He affirmed my place in the order of things. He had let it be known how easily I could be selected. (Coates, 19)

I began to cry. I rushed out the room and into the privacy of the bathroom because I couldn't stop. Professor Abegunde came to comfort me.

I read this book during a time of stories of police brutality against minorities. The country was about to elect a new president and we all feared a government that would not value minorities. But, someone with brown skin had murdered my cousin, someone who did not value him or himself. I found myself reading this book and the other books with a new perspective. I began to examine the cause and effects of poverty, lack of representation in government, police brutality, racism, underfunded education systems, redlining, and food deserts. Afterwards, I determined that my cousin's death was not just one man killing another. It was part of a cycle of events and circumstances that had started before I was born. The question I had: when would this cycle stop? When I came to college I

learned that there were names for the perspectives and experiences that I had growing up as a young black woman from the Southside of Chicago. I did not expect that my cousin's death would lead me to contemplate change in the Black community.

The answers to the questions that Professor Abegunde asked us became clearer to me after that day. In a world where Black lives mattered, I imagine that we would matter to ourselves more; that we would look at ourselves and see value; see family, not related by blood but by similar experiences and journeys and work together to make those better. I am willing to live and willing to die to help us see the value of each other and to see us work together to make it better for future generations.

“I’m still stuck on ‘We are human.’ ”

Ryan Lucas.

As a white man, a person of privilege who has not experienced the same struggles as Black people, it can be difficult to relate to their struggles. Practicing mindfulness while learning about the history of Black communities helped me empathize with the struggle of being Black in America. I truly came to understand the significance of the struggle when reading an article published in the Indiana Daily Student (Winter 2016). In the article, the author quotes a Black Lives Matter (BLM) student protestor who says something that at first seemed simple and obvious: “We are human. Our experiences are real.” However, as I continued to read, I kept returning to the first part of this statement.

Why did the protestor feel compelled to say it? As I thought about it more, I realized that the protestor was saying things that I never would have to say in my life. As a straight white male, my privilege allows me to never have my humanity or the value of my life questioned.

What must it feel like to say out loud the words, “We are human,” or “Black Lives Matter,” knowing that some people will disagree with you? What must it feel like when people say All Lives Matter but when Black people are killed because of their skin color, those people remain silent or try to justify the killings? At some point, I stopped reading: how draining it must be to constantly struggle to be accepted.

“We are human.” I came to understand the complexity of these words and why they are so important to the fight for social justice for African Americans. What if my ancestors had been bought and sold as property for centuries? I had never thought about this. How complex it is to fight for social justice in the same country that enslaved your ancestors.

Without the practice of mindfulness, I could easily have looked past the words, “We are human.” To not do so I had to change my reading process. For example, when I read something that stood out to me, I stopped and took the time to think about why that was the case instead of simply taking down a note to think about later. This also helped me to comprehend the reading. When I took the time to understand the history behind “We are human,” I was able to empathize with what it meant to experience this very real struggle.

By the time we began reading *Between the World and Me* (Coates 2015), I approached reading differently and this changed how I responded to the assignment. We took turns reading from the book. For me, part two had the greatest impact. In this section, Coates (2015) writes about the death of Prince Jones, a black man wrongfully killed by a Prince George’s County police officer in Virginia. He describes Jones’ body “as a vessel containing all of the time and effort and all of the love and affection that went into making Jones the man he was.” When Jones was killed, Coates explains, “everything in that vessel was spilled out onto the ground, lost and wasted” (p. 82).

Reading Coates’ words aloud in class had a different effect on me than when I read them by myself because I practiced mindfulness in class but not on my own. I was now forced to think about what the words meant as they came out of my mouth. When I read them on my own, they were words on a page. By practicing the mindfulness reading process – *Lectio Divina* — as part of the assignment, I was also able to empathize more with Jones. I thought about what had made Jones a man. I realized that they were things my parents had done for me. Jones was no different from me besides the color of his skin, and that was the reason that I was alive and he was not.

As I continued to read aloud I thought about this and I once again returned to the phrase, “We are human.” I stopped and began crying, which surprised me because this had not

happened when I read the excerpt at home. However, as I read the words aloud, paying attention to what I was saying and how, the power of Coates' vessel metaphor sank in. I thought about all of the hugs and kisses, rides to baseball practices, potty training, and lessons on how to tie a tie — all of the effort that went into making Jones who he was and I realized just how much was lost when Prince Jones was killed. My vessel would never be broken because of the color of my skin. What does it mean that I will never have to worry?

“Wow . . . Is it too late to change my final project?”

Moniel Sanders.

Between the World and Me (Coates 2015) brought my classmates and me to tears many times. Coates' letter to his son dissects the African American male experience and his own fears of having a son in 21st century America. Coates is vulnerable and open to his son about police brutality, fear of the future, and the implications of being an African American male. Coates' words can be felt in the soul; however, it was the idea of the book that often brought me to my knees and inspired me. The black male is usually shown as strong, in opposition, fighting and defending his masculinity at all costs. Coates stripped off the cloak of false masculinity, and revealed the fear he had and the resulting actions.

It was only by reading Coates' words slowly, out loud, mindfully in a practice known as “divine reading” that I was able to see the “vessel” (p. 82) of the Black male body. I began to wonder if other Black men were writing about the same thing. While reading Coates I realized the weight of having a son in the 21st century. Throughout the book Coates writes about his Philadelphia childhood and fearing for his body. He recounts his thoughts as young boy dreaming of escaping his body because of the continuous death around him. Not wanting to be yourself is paralyzing and hurtful. It was at this moment that I realized why my father is the way he is and how hard it must be navigating life has as a Black male. Although I had already submitted my final project proposal, this moment of reading and contemplating Coates' words awakened something in me. I knew my final presentation needed to celebrate Black men.

Coates' book was not the only one we read using contemplative practices or that inspired my final project. We had begun the class reading *Mis—education of a Negro* (Woodson 1933). Our assignments for this text were annotated bibliographies that were used to guide dialogue and reflection in class. Woodson's classic book is an analysis of the African American community. In it, he argues that African Americans should become and remain mindful of their environments and surroundings. I believe he called for African Americans to not seek help, but to be innovative in the way we solved our own problems. This quote remains with me from his readings: "If you can thereby determine what he will think, you will not need to worry about what he will do. You will not have to tell him to go to the back door. He will go without being told; and if there is no back door he will have one cut for his special benefit" (p. 192). This excerpt led me to contemplate how the media controls much of what our youth view. After some consideration, I knew that mass communication and media would be the methods used to achieve my final presentation and my website, *Heard it Through the Grapevine Press*, was born.

The press was launched in December 2016 as a direct result of my deep reflection on Coates' words to his son. Instead of the fear of the broken Black male body and vessel, I wanted to create a website to showcase unique and unconventional talents, successes, and complexity within Black male culture. The press itself would focus first on men then expand to include the extraordinary works of women, youth, and other minorities.

Our final assignment was to complete the statement, "In a world where Black lives matter, I imagine..." with a proposal for community change. One year after A263, I still imagine that *Heard It Through the Grapevine* will shed light on the extraordinary works of Black communities, especially Black men, so that instead of being "...taken, shattered on the concrete, and all its holy contents ... sent flowing back to earth" (p. 82) that these "vessels" may be filled with love.

Conclusion: "This is One Possible Future."

Change begins with the individual. Many of us teach the things that changed us and later transformed our lives. Two months before this class, I had returned from my second trip to

teach in Juba, South Sudan. While there I asked one of my drivers to tell me something good about Juba one morning. His response, referring to the South Sudanese: “These people. They are not human.” He was from a neighboring country. I was alarmed and hurt by the contempt in his voice, and after this exchange no longer wanted to ride with him, afraid that his inability to see the South Sudanese as humans would lead to him hitting a pedestrian one day. For the first time in my life, I saw one possible outcome when different groups of people were unable to see each other as human.

By the time I read Coates with students, I was exhausted and overwhelmed from violence. His book is not hopeful. It is a meditation on history, violence, and their impact on Black people. The *Lectio Divina* made it possible to sit quietly with others for the first time after Juba and reflect on what it meant to be human, a vessel that could be disappeared by anyone, at any time, through any method. It would be more than a year after Castile’s death before I watched a video of his death. The dashcam: 9 minutes 47 seconds, 7 bullets.

Fall 2016 was my first attempt to make sense of Castile and Juba by using pedagogical tools that could help students and me reflect on and re-vision Black lives outside the chalk lines. In this article, I wanted to reflect on how using the *Lectio Divina* in my Black Studies class led to personal transformation for students during a time of increased racial violence nationwide. I invited students to interpret and make meaning of their experiences, but did not re—interpret them and, thereby, silence them.

At the end of many contemplative practices, one may have epiphanies but not conclusions. The former’s tendency to raise more questions often makes the latter impossible. However, Smith, Lucas, and Sanders have reached conclusions: In a world where Black lives matter, Smith wants Black people to love themselves, Lucas wants to remember that except for his skin color, he is no different than Prince Jones, and Sanders wants to showcase the beauty and power of Black people and other minorities. And me? I want us all to remember that Juba, South Sudan is a very real possible future if our responses to each are the same as the man who drove me that day.

When he accepted my invitation, Lucas wrote: “As I re—read Coates for this, I once again was brought to tears by the very

same passage I wrote about in my section. It was a much needed reminder of what we learned and what we are working/fighting for.” This article is also a reminder, a breath, a space, an opportunity to change this violence into community action and, hopefully, transform our response and relationship to it and each other. It demonstrates the lasting and dynamic nature of contemplative practices and their ability to help us all “be the change” in the worlds in which we live and want to live.

References

- Baker, C. (2017). *Humane Insight: looking at images of African American suffering and death*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Baldwin, J. (1963). *The Fire Next Time*. New York, NY: Dial.
- Barbezat, D. & Bush, M. (2014). *Contemplative practices in higher education: powerful methods to transform teaching and learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Black Lives Matter. (2017). (<http://art.blacklivesmatter.com/i—imagine/>)
- Coates, T. (2015). *Between the world and me*. New York, NY: Spiegel & Grau.
- Miles, E. (2016, October 10). Hundreds gather for BLM demonstration. *Indiana Daily Student*. Retrieved October 15, 2016, from <http://www.idsnews.com/article/2016/10/hundreds—gather—for—blm—demonstration>
- Petty, S. (2017). Waking Up to All of Ourselves: Inner Work, Social Justice, & Systems Change. *Initiative for Contemplation Equity & Action*, 1(1), 1-14. Retrieved July 25, 2017. <http://www.contemplativemind.org/icea>
- Quashie, K. (2012). *The sovereignty of quiet: beyond resistance in Black culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University. Press.
- Rendon, L. & Kanagala, V. (2017). Embracing Contemplative Pedagogy in a Culturally Diverse Classroom. *Initiative for Contemplation Equity & Action, Action 1(1)*, 15-25. Retrieved July 25, 2017. <http://www.contemplativemind.org/icea>.
- The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. *The Tree of Contemplative Practices*. (n.d.). Retrieved July 25, 2017, from <http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree>
- Woodson, C. (1933). *The Mis—Education of the Negro*. Drewryville, VA: Khalifah's Booksellers & Associates.

Where do I Begin in Learning (More) About Mindfulness? A Resource Guide for those in Higher Education

Penelope Wong
Berea College

Introduction

The last decade has witnessed a rapid increase of the integration or teaching of mindfulness in the educational sector, and for the purposes of this resource guide, “educational sector” is defined as the K-16 sector, so kindergarten through post-secondary education. (That being said, there is increasing and already ample interest in the application of mindfulness practices in the early childhood and adult education sectors also). As the articles in this special theme issue have shown, mindfulness practices can be implemented in almost any setting even though the articles in this issue focused solely on higher education. Besides the resources offered by the authors of the articles in this issue, I have compiled here a variety of resources that I have found useful and refer to regularly. The resources here reflect my current state of knowledge and skills concerning mindfulness, which are still in the neophyte stage. Nevertheless, I have attempted to select a wide-range of resources keeping in mind, the readers will be on a continuum from knowing nothing or little about mindfulness to being an expert and skilled practitioner. I have also selected resources, which can suggest additional resources and have avoided as much as possible repeating resources referenced in the four articles in this special addition. Finally, it will be obvious that this list of selected resources reflects my professional home – teacher education. In this digital age there seems to be a platform to satisfy just about everyone’s preference, whether it be the traditional book or paper resource or an app for either Apple or Android or another electronic

resource. This guide is far from exhaustive, but comprehensiveness was not the intention. The resources listed here are ones I go back to over and over and are in many cases ones that experts in mindfulness recommended to me and often contain their own resources. I hope this last article is helpful as you go forth into further exploring the world of mindfulness.

Apps

Mindfulness Apps are being developed almost weekly. It seems impossible to keep up with the “best” ones. Furthermore, what is a wonderful app to one individual might not be the case to someone else. I have found that the best way to start finding apps that I will likely find useful is to consult a trusted source or simply explore what’s out there. The magazine, *Mindful*, has a list of suggested free apps - <https://www.mindful.org/free-mindfulness-apps-worthy-of-your-attention/> Another suggestion is to simply Google “Best mindfulness apps” and one will be provided a list of various individuals or organizations that give their top mindfulness apps. After reading five or six lists, one begins to notice the 3-4 apps that are mentioned over and over suggesting that some apps might be better than others.

Books

This particular category was one of the most difficult to compose because of the sheer number of really excellent texts about mindfulness. I have tried to balance pragmatic texts (e.g., ones for learning about mindfulness or introducing it to students) with more general texts addressing the philosophy of mindfulness from varying perspectives. I have also included some “classics” in the field. I only included a selection of texts from such writers as Tich Naht Hahn and John Kabat-Zinn, but they each have authored numerous books that might appeal to others. I have annotated the first three texts here as they seemed to augment the articles in this special theme issue. Finally, the authors listed here are not exhaustive. Other authors who are widely known and acclaimed in the mindfulness field include Jack Kornfield, Pema Chodron, Parker Palmer, Eckhart Tolle and many others who I regretfully have failed to mention.

- Jennings, P. (2015). *Mindfulness for Teachers: Simple Skills for Peace and Productivity in the Classroom*.

W.W. Norton: New York, NY. While this book has a K-12 context in mind, the skills highlighted concerning teachers are transferable to not only the post-secondary level but also beyond the classroom.

- Barbezat, D. & Bush, M. (2014). *Contemplative practices in higher education: Powerful Methods to Transform Teaching and Learning*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA. This simultaneously inspirational and practical text illustrates the myriad ways in which mindfulness can be integrated across the higher education curriculum in any course. A great companion to the organization/website, Association for the Contemplative Mind in Education.
- Rechtschaffen, D. (2014). *The Way of Mindful Education. Cultivating Well-Being in Teachers and Students*. W.W. Norton: New York, NY. This K-12 focused book provides teachers with very practical lessons and activities around mindfulness for students of all ages. This book also comes with a companion text or workbook, *The Mindful education workbook: Lessons for teaching mindfulness to students*.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Bantam/Random House.
- Kabat-Zinn (2012). *Mindfulness for beginners: Reclaiming the present moment - And your life*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True.
- Kabat-Zinn (2005). *Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. (10th ed.) New York: Hyperion.
- Langer, E. J. (1990). *Mindfulness*. Boston, MA: Da Capo Press.
- Palmer, P. (2007). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Glazer, S. (1999). *The heart of learning: Spirituality in education*. Tarcher/Penguin: New York, NY.

- Siegel, D.J. (2007). *The mindful brain: Reflection and attunement in the cultivation of well-being*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Siegel, D. J. (2014). *Brainstorm: The power and purpose of the teenage brain*. New York, NY: Tarcher.
- Hahn, T.N. (1999). *The miracle of mindfulness: An introduction to the practice of meditation* (M. Ho, Trans.). Boston, MA: Beacon Press
- Hanh, T.N. & Nguyen, A.N. (2006). *Walking meditation*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True.
- Salzberg, S. (2010). *Real happiness: The power of meditation: A 28-day program*. New York, NY: Harmony/Bell Tower.

Scholarly Journals/Databases on Mindfulness

To begin to select scholarly articles to list here would be an un-ending task. Just in the last year according to the American Mindfulness Research Association (AMRA), the number of publications on mindfulness more than doubled from 312 in 2013 to 667 in 2016 (AMR, p.1). It would be difficult to know where to start listing specific articles. Therefore, I have listed scholarly journals that either are devoted to the topic of mindfulness and/or publish scientific and other studies about mindfulness so specific topics under mindfulness can be pursued.

- *Mindfulness* - <https://link.springer.com/journal/12671>
- American Mindfulness Research Association - <https://goamra.org/>
- *Journal of Contemplative Inquiry* - <http://www.contemplativemind.org/journal>

Other sources that carry a number of peer-reviewed, scientific studies on mindfulness are

- *The Journal of Educational Psychology* - <http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/edu/index.aspx>
- The US National Library of Medicine/National Institutes of Health - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/>

MBSR Education/Training for Teachers

Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE)
<http://www.care4teachers.com/>

PassageWorks Institute - <http://passageworks.org/about/>
The Center for Koru Mindfulness -
<http://korumindfulness.org/teacher-certification/benefits/>

Additional MBSR educational programs can be found at the Association for the Contemplative Mind in Education website.

Organizations/Conferences

Association for the Contemplative Mind in Education

The “go to” site for mindfulness related topics in higher education. Some of the really helpful features are a syllabi archive (only accessible if a member), links to contemplative degree programs, and resources for K-12 practitioners - <http://www.contemplativemind.org/programs/acmhe>

Association for Mindfulness in Education

This collection of mindfulness organizations and individuals supports mindfulness training as a component of K-12 education. The website is most valuable for its list serve and directory of programs. <http://www.mindfuleducation.org/>

Bridging the Hearts and Minds of Youth Conference University of San Diego School of Medicine – very K-12 focused but has applications for emerging adults too.

<http://bridgingconference.org/>

Center for Mindfulness Practice and Research Conference Bangor University, Wales, United Kingdom -

<https://cmrpconference.com/>

Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

An organization dedicated to making social and emotional learning an integral component of the k-12 educational system. This organization has application to the post-secondary system.

<https://www.garrisoninstitute.org/about-us/our-purpose-2/>

Garrison Institute

A general, resource-rich organization devoted to contemplative practices. <https://www.garrisoninstitute.org/about-us/our-purpose-2/>

International Conference on Mindfulness

A global perspective on mindfulness. <http://www.cmc-ia.org/icm2018amsterdam/>

Mindful Schools

A k-12 centric website that is packed with helpful information for introducing mindfulness in the K-12 classroom. This is an especially useful website if you are new to mindfulness. <http://www.mindfulschools.org/>

Magazines and Programs About Mindfulness

The Lion's Roar

A Buddhist inspired magazine that focuses on applying the principles of mindfulness to daily life. While there is a strong theme or Buddhism, contemplative practices from other faiths and traditions are also highlighted. A beautifully written and illustrated periodical.

Mindful: Taking time for what matters

Each issue highlights a particular aspect of mindfulness from celebrities who practice mindfulness to using mindfulness to address every day challenges. Lots of tips and advice on practices.

On Being

An award-winning radio public broadcast hosted by National Public Radio that tackles various existential questions regarding the human condition. While most of the installments might not be about mindfulness per say, they are about topics that are related to mindfulness. <https://onbeing.org/programs/>

Publishers

The following publishers carry a variety of texts about mindfulness and closely related topics.

- New Harbinger Publications:
<http://www.newharbinger.com>
- Sounds True Publishing: <http://www.soundstrue.com>
- Wisdom Publications:
<http://www.wisdompubs.org/books/meditation-mindful-living>

Conclusion

Currently, it seems that one can't avoid hearing or seeing mindfulness applied to just about any topic. While there is a danger of the overuse and/or misuse of the term, balancing the academic and/or scientific understanding of mindfulness with its mainstream applications can be helpful when practicing mindfulness with students, particularly adolescents and emerging adults, who obtain much of their information electronically via the Internet or social media. I did not include some online resources, such as You Tube or various blogs, but these platforms can be a source of some very reliable and credible information. If one of the results of being mindful is cultivating an open, accepting and beginner's mind, then it seems that entertaining a variety of resources is in keeping with the practice.

Author Guidelines

The editor of *Journal for the Liberal Arts and Sciences* welcomes manuscripts related to a broad spectrum of academic disciplines and interests. Submissions should range from between 2000 and 5000 words in length, written in Times New Roman font (12 point) and must be accompanied by an abstract of up to 100 words. Manuscripts submitted for a special issue should include a reference to the theme of the issue. Authors can choose to submit their manuscripts as an email attachment to jlas@oak.edu or to the mailing address below. Email submissions are to include a message indicating that the manuscript is not under consideration with any other publisher but *JLAS*. Submissions by mail are to include a cover letter indicating that the manuscript is not under consideration with any other publisher as well as an electronic copy of the manuscript on either CD-ROM or diskette. All manuscripts must be submitted in MS Word format.

Receipt of manuscripts will be acknowledged within two weeks of submission. The review process generally takes between two to six months and authors will be notified of the editorial decision within six months of receipt. Total time between submission and publication can range from six months to one year. There is neither a remuneration offered nor a charge for publication in *JLAS*. Authors will be provided with three complimentary copies of the issue in which their articles appear.

For most issues of *Journal for the Liberal Arts and Sciences*, the Publication of the American Psychological Association (APA) Sixth Edition is to serve as a guide for preparation of manuscripts. However, special issues may vary in required documentation style, depending on the theme. Final documentation decisions rest with the Editor.

Originals of tables and figures, such as graphs and charts should be supplied. Graphics should be prepared and captioned as exactly as they are intended to appear in the journal. All explanatory notes should be avoided whenever possible and the intonation incorporated in the text. Essential notes should be gathered in a section following the text and listed under the heading "End Notes." End notes should be identified with consecutive numbers assigned in keeping with the superscript numeral used at the point requiring the note.

Randy Mills, Editor
Journal for the Liberal Arts and Sciences
138 N. Lucretia
Oakland City University
Oakland City, Indiana 47660
rkmills@oak.edu