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Cultivating Contemplative Mind in the Classroom

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...like an mp3 player, your mind has a “rewind” setting—which allows you to focus on the past. It also has a “fast forward” setting—which allows you to think about the future. Being mindful means avoiding these settings and keeping your mind set on “play,” so you’re fully aware of the present moment and focused on what you’re experiencing right now. - Dr. Amishi Jha

Needs it Addresses

Perceived anxiety is an uncomfortable experience for many preservice teachers and counseling students as they meet their students and clients in the stage of becoming a professional. The negative impact of anxiety has a strong influence on the performance of the preservice teachers and counseling students (Sammephet & Wanphet, 2013). Mindfulness practices have been linked to prevent burnout and improve stress management (Roeser et al., 2013). However, there is a lack of training on the strategy to promote emotional wellness. Purpose: The purpose of this practice is to promote preservice teachers and counseling students’ positive psychological and emotional wellness.

Evidence it Benefits Students

The intention of this practice in the classroom is to create a respectful learning community by cultivating student’s contemplative mind. Evidence of this practice benefits UNLV students have been observed by

- course evaluations,
- student assignments (e.g., reflection paper), and
- instructional feedback (e.g., conversation, early term course evaluation).

A student quoted that “the incorporation of yoga and meditation helped many of us relax during our stressful times.” Another student noted that “this (meditation and various stretching) allowed students to recenter themselves at the end of their work day and prepare to engage with new content.”

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Teaching Practice

The instructors implemented various mind-body practices including mindfulness meditation, yoga, or tai-chi movement at the first 5 minutes in the beginning of each class session, in hope to guide students to familiarize themselves with the importance of emotional wellness on their performance and learn hands-on exercise to manage stress. A common focus in all practice is the cultivation of learner’s abilities to direct or sustain attention intentionally and experience non judgment on present moment in the form of bodily sensations, feelings, mental images, and thoughts through specific practices. Such practices include focused-attention meditation to develop concentration, in which attention is focused on a single object like the breath; body scans, in which participants focus their attention progressively throughout the body to bring awareness to emotional experience; kindness and gratitude meditation, uses guided imagery meditation to cultivate positive emotion toward oneself and others.

Resources and Where to Find Them

Various contemplative inquiry used in the classroom to foster mindfulness including:

- Guided meditation
- Mind-body movement
- Arts
- Music

Selected resources regarding mindfulness practices:

- National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health <https://nccih.nih.gov/>
- The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society <http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree>
- Stanford Medicine <https://wellmd.stanford.edu/healthy/mindfulness.html>
- GoNoodle <https://www.gonoodle.com/>
- The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning <https://casel.org/>



For Further discussion



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