

Mindfulness Helps Teachers Understand Their Own Emotions Better

Mindfulness teachers must balance their focus on their content with the emotions they are experiencing. Bringing mindfulness to your teaching will help you to regulate your own emotions and behaviors and ways of responding to your students.

Centering Exercise

1. Before class, take a moment to get centered.
2. Stand with your feet about shoulder width and relax your knees, don't lock them.
3. Bring your attention to a point in your abdomen about two inches below your navel and about an inch into your body.
4. Spend a few minutes focusing on this point and feeling gravity connecting your body to the Earth.

Try this exercise before teaching an exercise or class. How did this prepare you?

Mindfulness Helps Teachers Manage Difficult Students

Before allowing our own emotional reactions to the student's behavior to take over, try this exercise.

1. Think about a student you find challenging.
2. Recall the last time she or he did something that made teaching difficult.
3. What emotions does the memory elicit? Do you feel annoyed? Frustrated?
4. How does your body feel? For example, are your shoulders tense? Your stomach is tight?
5. Don't try to stop the feelings or change them. Just sit with them.
6. Listen to the thoughts that come from these feelings.

Journal what comes to you and shifts with this exercise.

Mindfulness and Wait Time

You may recall that pacing is important to effectively delivering the curriculum. It is also a tool for building your relationship with your students, communicating respect, mutuality, and bringing a present moment focus to your students.

Learn to Pause. Give wait time to allow students to think, to express and share their ideas, to process the experience.

Three Second Wait Time Exercise

1. Explain that you will be giving everyone a few seconds to think before they respond or before you move forward.
2. Each time you do your three-second wait time, use it to mindfully take a nice, deep breath.
3. If you are standing, notice the weight of your feet on the ground.
4. Allow your awareness to broaden so that you can take in the entire class.
5. Scan the class, noticing each student. If you have called for a response from them, choose one you may not have called on much lately.
6. As the student speaks, listen mindfully and spend time considering it.

Even mindfulness teachers can experience stress. The stressors may arise from any number of things. What is important is to pause, breathe and be mindful of what is being experienced.

Take note of the times you use the Three Second Wait Time. What do you observe in yourself and your students?

Recommended Supplemental Reading

Patricia A. Jennings. Mindfulness for Teachers.

Reflection Questions

What strategies will you use to remember to integrate these exercises into your preparations for your students?

Think about ways you may connect these exercises to your active listening skills. What connections are you able to identify?

How might these exercises inform your discernment for the management of your students?