



# Leading with Calm in High- Stakes Moments

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Mindfulness promises to equip youth with a means to better realize their self-identity and individual responses to these stress-inducing stimuli.





# What is Mindfulness?

“Mindfulness means **paying attention** in a particular way:

**on purpose**, in the **present moment**, and **non-judgmentally** ...

When we commit ourselves to paying attention in an **open way**,

without falling prey to our own likes and dislikes, opinions and prejudices,

projections and expectations, new possibilities open up and we have a chance

to free ourselves from the **straitjacket of unconsciousness.**”



# Leading with Calm

- **Co-Regulation**
- **The cost of stress**
- **The Body- Mind Disconnect**
- **What trauma can look like**
- **STOP method**
- **The STAR method**
- **The Importance of Self-Soothing**

# Co-Regulation

Lower vocal pitch

Slow speech cadence

Step back slightly

Ask questions

Redirect others in the space



# Cost of Stress

**Heart rate spikes**

**Panic Attack**

**Brain doesn't process**

**Rise of cortisol**

**Sweating or urgent bathroom need**



# The Body–Mind Disconnect

## Limits of Traditional Lectures

Traditional lectures treat cognition as brain-only, ignoring the body's crucial role in attention and engagement.

## Benefits of Active Breaks

Short active breaks of 5–10 minutes boost vigilance, cognitive performance, and reduce mind wandering during lectures.

## Embodied Cognition and Learning

Embodied cognition integrates sensorimotor activity, activating brain circuits that improve memory and executive control.

## Enhancing Mental Health

Movement and mindfulness in classrooms reduce stress and improve emotional regulation and academic performance.



# What can trauma look like?

- Body Aches
- Headaches/ Migraines
- Sleep Disturbances
- Social Withdrawal
- Abandoning Hobbies
- Compulsive behaviors- repeatedly checking actions, arranging items for symmetry, performing rituals around actions/ behaviors.
- Hair pulling or chewing
- Picking at nails or skin



# What can trauma look like?

When we **perceive** a threat we tend to react automatically with adrenalin based reaction – saving ourselves from danger by fighting with, running away from, protecting or camouflaging ourselves...

....fight, flight, fawn and freeze.

Problem-solving processes where we attempt to fix or resolve the perceived problem

Dealing with Stresses in our Lives



# STOP method

**S- stop what you are doing**

**T- take a breath**

**O- Observe, note external facts and internal feelings**

**P- proceed mindfully, choose a calculate response**



# STAR method

S – Smile

T – Take deep belly breath, about 12 seconds,  
at least 4 times

A – A pause to reset your mind

Relax – roll your shoulders down your back,  
release your lower jaw



# Integration

*“True teaching is not an accumulation of knowledge. It is an awakening of consciousness which goes through successive stages.”* –Proverb from the Egyptian Temple of Amen of Ipet-isut (Karnak)



# Structures

- Start each class with breath work
- Take a stretch/ twist break
- Balance work before a test
- Movement as a brain reset
- Debrief journal



# Breathwork 3 ways

## Box Breath

4 second inhale, 4 second hold breath, 4 second exhale, 4 second hold your breath

## Humming

Hold your breath for 10 second without running out of breath or your voice getting weaker.

## 8/6Breathing

The extended hold forces your body to sit with rising CO2 levels without panicking. The long exhale then dumps that CO2 and triggers a deep parasympathetic shift. The combination of breath retention and extended exhale creates a stronger calming response than either one alone. It is essentially a forced nervous system reset.



# Stretch and Reset

## Seated

## Standing

## Balance



# Let's Move

Pair Up

Follow the movement

Finger Work



# Practice Gratitude

When you experience trauma, the screen in your head puts those traumatic events on replay. Your own thoughts start to torture you by turning the trauma into a pattern of self talk.

Your thoughts whisper to you that you are worthless, a fraud, you deserved whatever happened to you, you are incompetent, and that you don't deserve happiness.

But when you practice deep, respectful, contemplative, heart-based gratitude, your abused limbic system sees this outer, compassionate reflection and fire internally in the same way.

Over time, these neurons wire together semi-permanently in a way that supports healing.



## **Embodied Learning Benefits**

Incorporating movement and mindfulness enhances cognitive functions and emotional well-being among students.

## **Sustaining Attention**

Brief embodied activities during lectures help sustain student attention and reduce cognitive fatigue.

## **Inclusive Pedagogy**

These strategies support inclusive, student-centered teaching models adaptable across disciplines.

## **Easy Implementation**

Embodied learning practices can be immediately integrated with minimal disruption to existing curricula.

# Questions? Thank you!

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