

University of Massachusetts Amherst

From the Selected Works of Madeleine K. Charney

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Contemplative Pedagogy & Mindfulness for Librarians

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/charney_madeleine/88/

Contemplative Pedagogy and Mindful Librarianship



Five College Libraries
Innovative Learning event
March 31, 2017

Today

9:40

- Welcome and Introductions
- What is Contemplative Pedagogy?
- Discussion of ACRL Framework chapter of Mindful Librarian



10:50

Orientation to options for personal mindfulness techniques

Break; option to sample guided mindfulness techniques :

- Breathing
- Labyrinth
- Stretching/movement
- Collective listening/Listening with resonance



11:30 LUNCH with discussion topics (change tables at 12:05 if you want):



- Teaching (e.g. one-shots, embedded instruction)
- One-on-ones (e.g. individual consultation, reference interaction).
- Workplace (e.g. student worker trainings, conflict management, life-work balance)
- Programming & Spaces
- Personal contemplative practices
- Contemplative Pedagogy & Social Justice



12:30 Wrap-up



Today we're talking about two connected, but separate things:

-  1 Teaching, instruction; outward facing practices
-  2 Work-life integration and balance; sustainable workplaces

What is Contemplative Pedagogy?



contemplation, *n.*

1. The action of beholding, or looking at with attention and thought.

2.

a. The action of contemplating or mentally viewing; the action of thinking about a thing continuously; attentive consideration, study.

b. Without reference to a particular object: Continued thinking, meditation, musing.

c. with *a* and *pl.*; sometimes, a meditation expressed in writing.

3. Religious musing, devout meditation. (The earliest sense; very common down to 17th c.)

(OED)



[mindful learning] “values multiple perspectives, encourages the participant to experience control by shifting between perspectives, and sees knowledge as fluid. Skills and information are neither inherently good nor bad; instead, the knower is encouraged to step back and reflect on solutions and outcomes to determine deeper meaning within context.”

Ellen J. Langer,
The Power of Mindful Learning



“Contemplative pedagogy invites students to actively situate themselves within the content of their courses and apply the concepts to their own lives.”

Beth Barila,

Integrating Mindfulness into Anti-oppression Pedagogy



Goals of contemplative pedagogy

- Focus and attention building
- Contemplation and introspection into the content of the course, in which students discover the material in themselves and thus deepen their understanding of the material
- Compassion, connection to others and deepening sense of the moral and spiritual aspect of education
- Inquiry into the nature of their [own] minds, personal meaning, creativity, and insight

Daniel P. Barbezat and Mirabai Bush,
Contemplative Practices in Higher Education

Some examples of C.P. practices



- Asking students to stay open to “swerves” in the direction of their research
- Creating opportunities for mindfully crafting research questions and drawing distinctions between various information needs and the best sources to meet those needs
- Reflective writing exercises in which students explore their research interest(s) in relationship to the context of the specific course
- Creating opportunities for students to reflect on who may be involved in the conversation around their subject, and whose perspectives they have not yet considered
- Starting sessions with a grounding exercise, such as a communal deep breath, a moment of silence to reflect on the themes of the course or their topics of research, or freewriting on what students are thinking about research in this first moment of the class

Other practices:

- Open-ended discussion
- Attentive listening
- Quiet time
- Movement
- Mind mapping
- Mindfulness programming
- Social justice/compassion

What else?

- Labyrinth (finger)
- Metaphor
- Calming visual image or audio
- Asking about feelings
- Focus on humanity
- Leaving space for student sharing
- Visualizing future state (hopefully positive)
- silent listening/reflecting back



Librarians and stress

- Technology
- Budget cuts
- Staffing shortages
- Difficult patrons/co-workers
- Compassion fatigue
- Political climate
- Etc.



Benefits of mindfulness practices

- Decrease stress
- Increase concentration
- Improve decision making/problem solving
- More meaningful learning experiences
- Social/emotional growth
- May inspire and/or deepen commitment to social justice
- Bring into our work

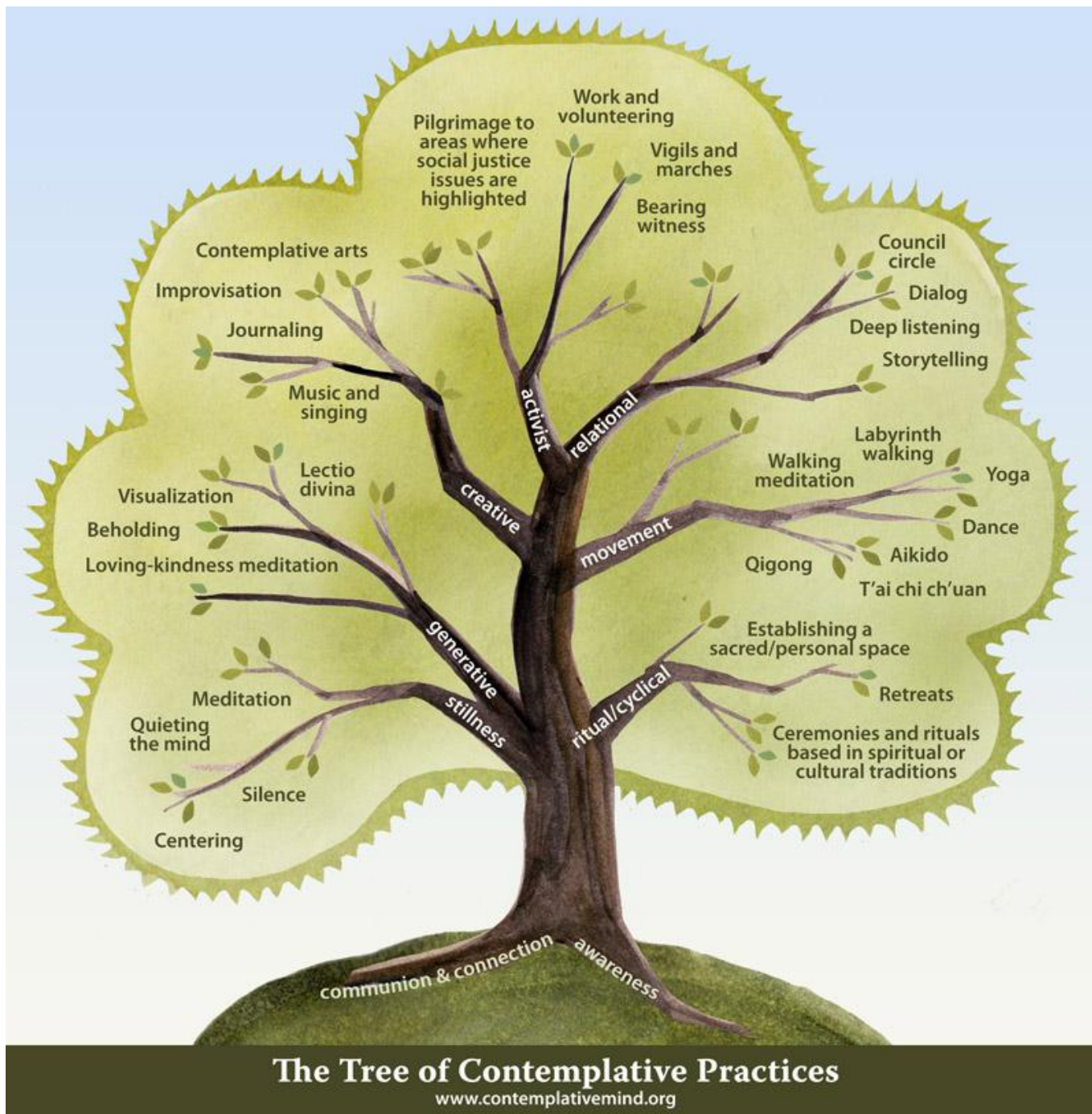
Some examples of mindfulness practices



- Meditation (e.g. silent, guided)
- Movement (e.g. yoga, tai chi)
- Breathing
- Walking
- Writing
- Music-making, Singing, Chanting
- Increased awareness in daily activities (e.g. words we use)
- Increased compassion for self and others

What else?

- Arts & crafts
- OUTSIDE activity (esp. natural settings)
- Observing other animals/birdwatching
- Mindful eating
- Reset music
- Pet therapy/BUNNY study breaks
- Tech breaks/plan for tech use
- cooking
- Compassionate commuting
- Compassionate being
- Loving-kindness meditation
- Allowing non-productivity
- Mindful looking; holding images in mind
- Habit breaking/change environment
- Practicing non-judgement



The Tree of Contemplative Practices

www.contemplativemind.org

Opportunities

- ACRL Contemplative Pedagogy Interest Group:
www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl/directoryofleadership/interestgroups/acr-igc
[p](#)
- Contemplative Pedagogy Working Group at UMass; contact Brian Baldi:
bbaldi@umass.edu
- *Mindfulness for Librarians* Facebook group, including virtual hangouts
(4/24 1:30-2:30) www.facebook.com/groups/mindfulnessforlibrarians/
- “Libraries and Compassion Fatigue” webinar through Mass Library
Systems
(6/6, 1:00-2:00); register at media@masslibsystem.org
- Downtown Mindfulness classes in Amherst remindingproject.com/mbsr/
- New England Library Association conference (10/22-24); theme:
“ReCharge!”
- Association for the Contemplative Mind in Higher Education conference
(10/27-29); theme: “Radicalizing Contemplative Education: Compassion,
Intersectionality, and Justice in Challenging Times”

Selected resources

- Daniel Barbezat & Allison Pingree. *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education* (2013)
- Beth Barila. *Integrating Mindfulness into Anti-oppression Pedagogy* (2015)
- The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. www.contemplativemind.org
- Michelle Chatman webinar: "Using Contemplative Practices to Promote Well-Being and Social Justice Awareness." www.contemplativemind.org/archives/2717
- Barbara A. Craig report for The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society: "Contemplative Practice in Higher Education: An Assessment of the Contemplative Practice Fellowship Program, 1997–2009." http://www.contemplativemind.org/admin/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/academic_fellowships_evaluation.pdf
- Han F. De Wit, *Contemplative Psychology* (1991)
- Tobin Hart, "Opening the Contemplative Mind in the Classroom," *Journal of Transformative Education* 2, no. 1 (2004)
- Carly Hodes, "Contemplative practices boost creativity in problem-solving". *Cornell Chronicle*, July 11, 2014. <http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/2014/07/contemplative-practices-boost-problem-solving>
- Harry R. Lewis. *Excellence Without A Soul: How a Great University Forgot Education* (2006).
- Richard J Moniz, Joe Eshleman, Jo Henry, Howard Slutzky. *The Mindful Librarian: Connecting the Practice of Mindfulness to Librarianship* (2015)
- Ed Sarath, "Meditation in Higher Education: The Next Wave?" *Innovative Higher Education* 27, no. 4, (2003)
- Carol Smallwood and Linda Wade. *Job Stress and the Librarian: Coping Strategies from the Professionals* (1991)