Communicating Mindfulness: Tools for explaining contemplative practices and their value

Presentation by Linda Coutant, Ed.D., Appalachian State University - coutantla@appstate.edu
5th Annual Contemplatives Practices for 21st Century Higher Education Conference, March 9, 2018

Research supporting the use of contemplative practices in education includes:


In an analysis of student work and feedback, the authors found that contemplative reading, reflecting writing, and deep listening in pairs led to greater meaning-making, academic motivation, and wholeheartedness.


This study found that participation by college students in 15-week classes in Pilates, Taiji quan, or GYROKINESIS led to increased mindfulness scores, and increased mindfulness accounted for changes in mood and perceived stress and sleep quality.


A randomized, control study of more than 600 university students in the United Kingdom who participated in an eight-week Mindfulness Skills for Students curriculum showed participants had reduced distress scores than non-participants. The authors recommended wider use of the intervention to support student well-being.


This study found that the four-week Koru Mindfulness Curriculum designed for emerging adults was effective in reducing college students’ symptoms of stress, enhancing psychological well-being, and promoting sleep.

Canadian college students who practiced a three-minute breathing exercise at the start of a communication class reported having more positive emotionality and fewer episodes of mind wandering and distraction than students in a control group.


This quantitative study noted a significant negative correlation between mindfulness and perceived stress, supporting the authors' hypotheses that students who score high on mindfulness report less perceived stress, and use more of rational and detached coping strategies and less emotional and avoidant styles. The authors also found that individuals with low mindfulness tended to experience a higher degree of perceived stress and use emotional coping and avoidance coping.


This quantitative study suggests that mindfulness meditation practiced by college business students in India had a positive impact on individuals' states of mindfulness, compassion, and moral reasoning, and decreased egocentric bias.


A mixed-methods study revealed that contemplative education supports the underlying dispositions for independent critical thinking among undergraduates.


In a meta-analysis of 40 years of research, the authors found that meditation/mindfulness has the potential to enhance students' cognitive and academic performance, management of academic-related stress, and the development of the whole person—which the authors acknowledged are aspects of higher education’s traditional goals.


This review of literature shows the benefits of meditative disciplines and other contemplative practices to include enhanced attention, lucidity, sense withdrawal, thought and cognition, emotional intelligence, equanimity, motivation, moral maturity, and voluntary control of the autonomic nervous system.