

MCC WRITING CENTER – MINDFULNESS PROJECT / SPRING 2014

WEEK ONE

Exercise: Allow an extra minute or two when you open WCOOnline [online appointment scheduling system] to see your schedule at the beginning of your shift to focus only on what the students who have scheduled appointments with you say they want to work on that day. When your mind strays to past history with the student or the assignment or the instructor, return your thoughts and focus to the task at hand (over and over again as needed). Try to approach each consultation thinking only of the task and how best to approach it.

Home: For five minutes each day, sit and do nothing but notice your breath. When your mind strays, return to the breath, over and over again as needed). Set a timer so that you aren't distracted by the need to pay attention to the time.

WEEK TWO

Exercise: Try to limit each of your consultation this week to 25 minutes. Take the five minutes before the next appointment to re-center yourself. Walk in the hall, count to 60 while you dry your hands under a warmer, whatever.

HOME: Put space between things. Between two things that are usually rushed (getting ready and racing out the door, going from a meeting to your class, etc.), plan an extra five minutes for meditating and re-centering. Adhere to it as if it were another meeting or appointment on your calendar.

WEEK THREE

Exercise: Spend a few minutes at the beginning of a shift and between appointments noticing the sensory details of the room—the temperature, the sounds you hear, the colors you see around you, the ways the chair and the table feel, the smell of the air. Take note of anything you've never noticed or that you experienced anew by paying attention.

HOME: Get in touch with your senses by noticing the temperature of your skin, the background noises around you, the way each part of your body feels, the colors you see around you, the smell of the air.

WEEK FOUR

Exercise: When you are reading a student's writing during a consultation, pause at the end of each paragraph if only for a few seconds to refocus—breathe in, breathe out.

HOME: When you are driving and come to a red light or a stop sign, sit back and make use of these twenty or thirty seconds to relax — to breathe in, breathe out.

WEEK FIVE

Exercise: Cheng Meng Tan encourages wishing everyone love when you walk into a room. He suggests we think, “I love you!” and send that sentiment to everyone. Try pausing a moment to do this each time you walk into the writing center this week.

Home: Once a day, practice lovingkindness as described here by Jack Kornfield: here: <http://www.jackkornfield.com/2011/02/meditation-on-lovingkindness/>

WEEK SIX

Exercise: On a day that you are working in the writing center, make that intention specific to your work. For instance, “I aspire to express more patience today when I work with (name a specific student or situation).” Then, practice mindfulness by recalling the intention prior to your writing center shift, reminding yourself to return to the intention as needed, recognizing when you do something to support or embody the intention, and acknowledging later anything that aligned with your intention without you consciously thinking about it. When your shift is over, reflect upon how (if at all) it was affected by the intention you set for it.

Home: As Deborah Schoerberlein and Suki Sheith note in *Mindful Teaching and Teaching Mindfulness*, “the very first opportunity for mindfulness occurs as you transition from sleep into wakefulness. If you bring mindful attention to the process of waking, you may start to find that the quality of your day differs from simply moving automatically through your morning routine. The objective of waking mindfully is paying attention, deeply, regardless of whether your immediate experience is marked by calm or chaos” (17).

This week, each morning, make an effort to transition from sleep to conscious awareness by greeting the day with a sense of gratitude. And before you get out of bed, set an intention for the day. As Schoerberlein and Sheith describe it, “Developing an intention is similar to visualizing, but instead of a picture you develop a mental, emotional, or attitudinal model of what you would like to accomplish or perhaps just the way you intend to encounter activities” (19). Be realistic and start small. “I intend to be patient in every encounter with every person today” may be a lofty goal, which will only set yourself up for disappointment. As you transition each night back from wakefulness to sleep, reflect upon how (if at all) your day was affected by the intention you set that morning.

WEEK SEVEN

Exercise: Even if you already know what the student is working on or have experience with that particular class, assignment, or instructor, while discussing the student’s expectations and explanation of the task, concentrate on each word you hear, and repeat back to confirm that you understood. Try to read and listen to what the student wants to work on without imposing your own understanding of the task or rushing through the process.

Home: While eating your breakfast or lunch, put your entire mind into this task. Concentrate on each bite. Notice the flavor, the consistency, the chewing motion. Eat slowly and completely. Appreciate the process.

WEEK EIGHT

Exercise: Pay attention to your posture and body language as you interact with students during consultations. In what ways does it reflect how you feel about the student, the paper, the assignment, and/or the task?

Home: For five minutes each day, pay attention to your walking by slowing your pace and consciously feeling the weight of the ground against your feet.