



# Strategic Empathy

## Toolkit

### for Helping Professionals

#StrategicEmpathy

#SelfCompassion

#IAmGrateful

#MindfulMoments

#HealingJustice

#ResilientCommunities

2019

© Nikita Gupta, MPH, CHES, RYT

[www.NikitaGupta.com](http://www.NikitaGupta.com)





## Strategic Empathy Toolkit for Helping Professionals

### Table of Contents

Introduction to Trauma-Informed Approach .....	1
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Study .....	2
Impact of Trauma over the Lifespan .....	3-4
6 Trauma-Informed Guiding Principles .....	5
<b>Strategic Empathy Practices</b>	
Self-Reflection .....	6-7
Trauma-Responsive Spaces to Facilitate Reflection and Growth .....	7
Mind Dump Journaling Activity .....	8
Normalizing Statements .....	9-10
Effective Praise .....	11-12
Mindfulness, Meditation, and Breathing	
Facilitating Meditation for Groups or Individuals .....	13
Scripts for Meditation Facilitation .....	15-16
Incorporating Mindful Breathing into 1-1 Interactions .....	17-18
About Meditation and Deep Breathing .....	19-21
Free Meditation Audio Tracks .....	22
Mindfulness Apps .....	23
Index of Resources .....	24-27



# Introduction to Trauma

## What is trauma?

An event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. (SAMHSA)

## Types of Trauma

- individual trauma
- complex trauma
- insidious/historical trauma

*Trauma has a biological impact on the human being as an organism, with consequences that affect mental, emotional, physical, and social thriving.*

See **Index** for additional resources, including the Student Mental Health Program: Training and Technical Assistance for California Community Colleges

## Examples of Trauma

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Abandonment, betrayal of trust (such as abuse by a caregiver)
- Emotional neglect, family/caregiver dysfunction
- The death or loss of a loved one
- Life-threatening illness in a caregiver/family member
- Witnessing domestic violence
- Automobile accidents or other serious accidents
- Bullying
- Witnessing or experiencing community violence (e.g., drive-by shooting, fight at school, robbery)
- Witnessing police activity or having a close relative incarcerated
- Addiction
- Divorce
- Geographic displacement
- War/Combat
- Civil/Political unrest

## Three “E’s” of Trauma

- **Events** -- *actual circumstances/threats that compromise healthy development*
- **Experience of Events** -- *individual's reaction to/perception of the event(s); ways in which one labels, assigns meaning to, and is disrupted physically and psychologically; linked to developmental experiences and mindsets*
- **Effects** -- *impact of the event(s) on individual; can occur immediately or have delayed onset*

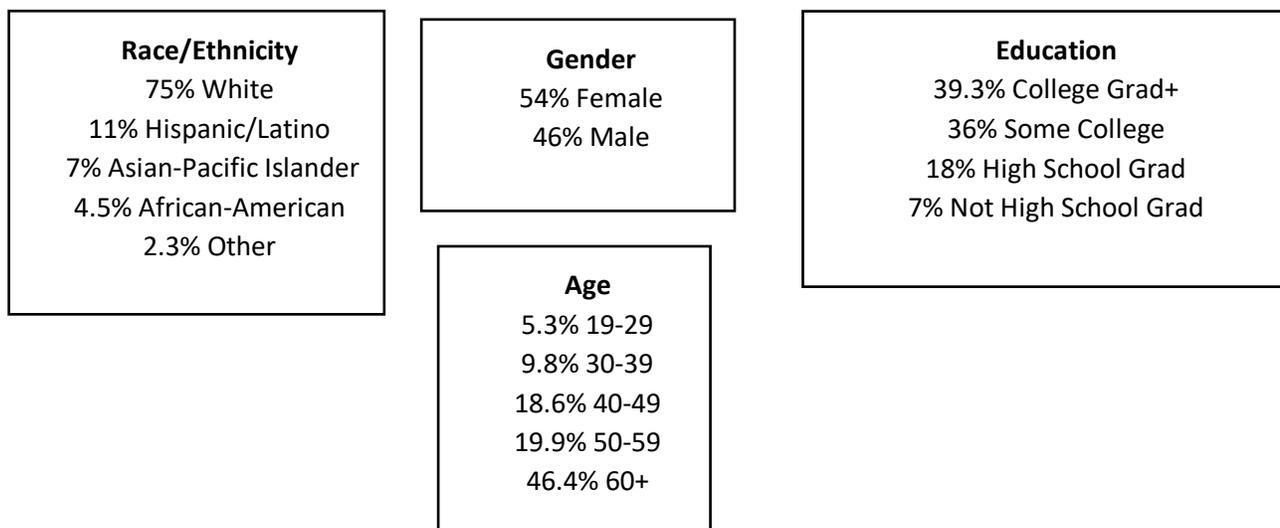
# ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) Study

- Largest study ever conducted on trauma and its impact over the life span
- Collaboration between Center for Disease Control (national organization) and Kaiser Permanente (HMO)
- Study took place over a 10-year period, involving 17,000 people
- Participants recruited between 1995-1997
- Looked at effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) over the lifespan

## ACEs Survey Asked questions related to 7 categories of childhood experiences

- Psychological, physical, sexual abuse
- Violence against mother
- Mental illness, suicide in family
- Family member in prison

## Who Took the Survey?

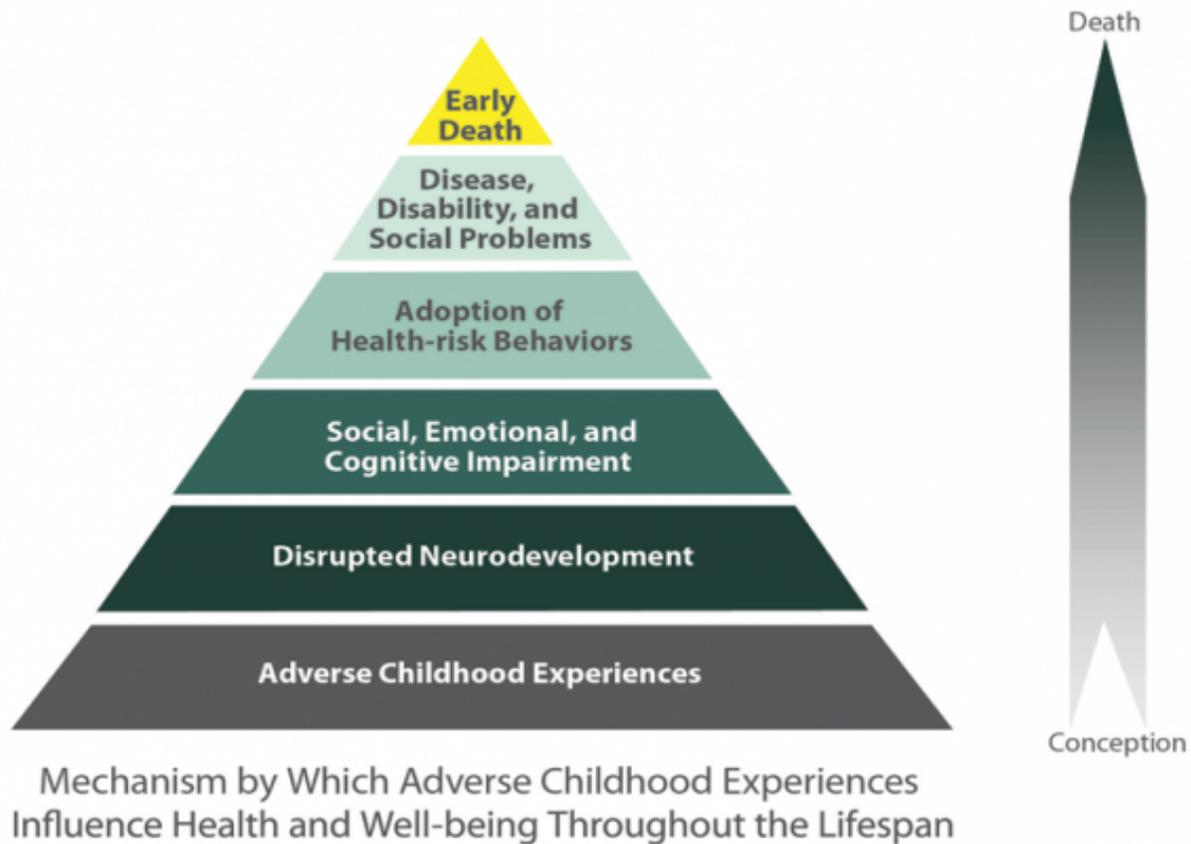


## Key Findings

1. Over 50% respondents reported 1 ACE
2. Over 25% reported 2 or more ACEs

Researchers found a *graded relationship* between the number of ACEs and adult health risk behaviors and diseases

## Impact of Trauma over the Lifespan



**Source:** The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. CDC.gov. Atlanta, Georgia: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention. May 2014.

**Reflection:** What are the implications of the ACEs Study findings with regards to the population(s) that you work with?

## What can trauma look like?

Students impacted by trauma may exhibit some of the following behaviors/affects:

- Reactivity and impulsivity
- Inhibition in learning and exploring
- Anger, aggression, or disassociation
- Reduced ability to focus and/or retain information
- Difficulty with risk taking
- Withdrawal, isolation, or numbness
- Perfectionism
- Tendency to miss a lot of classes
- Challenges with emotional regulation
- Anxiety about deadlines, exams, group work, or public speaking
- Helplessness, or dissociation when stressed
- Involvement in unhealthy relationships
- Self-sabotage

*“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.” – Rachel Remem*

## What is a Trauma-Informed Approach?

- Recognizes that trauma is widespread, harmful, and a costly public health problem.
- Acknowledges the pervasive impact of trauma and how service systems may help to **resolve** or **exacerbate** trauma-related issues.
- Helps prevent re-traumatization of communities and instead enhance healing, growth, and systematic equity.

## Qualities of a Trauma-Informed Organization

- Recognizes the widespread impact of trauma
- Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in all
- Increases safety for all
- Seeks to actively resist re-traumatization
- Integrates knowledge about trauma into policies and infrastructure
- Creates a community of hope and health

**Reflection:** In what ways does your organization align with a trauma-informed approach to providing services? What are additional ways in which your organization can be more trauma-informed in its protocols, infrastructure, policies, and strategies for delivering services?

## 6 Trauma-Informed Guiding Principles

<b>Safety</b>	Constituents and staff feel physically and psychologically safe (includes environment and interpersonal interactions). *Safety is defined by those who are being served.
<b>Trustworthiness &amp; Transparency</b>	Operations and decisions are conducted with transparency with goal of building and maintaining trust across all constituents and staff
<b>Peer Support &amp; Mutual Self-Help</b>	Vehicles for establishing safety, hope, trust, collaboration, and using lived experience to promote recovery and healing. *Peers = survivors
<b>Collaboration &amp; Mutuality</b>	Leveling of power differences through partnering, joint decision-making, respect and care. *Acknowledges that healing occurs in relationship.
<b>Empowerment, Voice &amp; Choice</b>	Individual strengths and experiences are built upon. Actively promote resilience and healing. Shared decision-making, cultivation of self-advocacy skills. Adequate organizational support for staff.
<b>Cultural, Historical, &amp; Gender Issues</b>	Active investment in addressing cultural stereotypes and biases (social justice). Leverages healing value of diverse cultural beliefs and practices. Recognizes and addresses historical trauma.

### What can you do?

- Take good care of yourself so that you can be present for others
- Practice your active listening skills
- Be empathetic (What is the student experiencing that caused them to act this way?)
- Be mindful of your body language
- Follow through and don't make promises you can't keep!
- Provide a safe and calm environment for the student
- Become more sensitive to understanding one's current challenges in the context of past trauma.
- Validate and normalize trauma survivor's experiences, while guiding them toward a growth mindset
- Empower students to manage their present lives more effectively



## Strategic Empathy Practice #1: Self-Reflection

- ◆ Intentionally create a self-reflective environment on a daily basis
- ◆ Give time in classes/workshops for dyad check-ins (see prompt ideas below)
- ◆ Create trauma-responsive space to promote reflection (see recommendations below)
- ◆ Ask open ended, reflective questions to elicit responses and dialogue

### Relational Check-Ins: Guidelines and Prompts

- ◆ Activity time: 5-10 minutes
- ◆ Facilitator: Share reflection prompt.
- ◆ Person A (Speaker): Speaker shares their response (what they feel comfortable sharing). **(3 minutes)**
- ◆ Person B (Listener): After speaker is finished sharing, listener reflects back what they heard, offers effective praise and/or validation. **(1 minute)**
- ◆ Switch roles.
  - *Modify these guidelines as needed depending on the size of the group and the time available*
  - *Encourage people to pair with people they don't know*
  - *Include dyad check-ins during each class session, workshop or meeting*

### Growth-Mindset Oriented Prompts

- Describe a recent micro-success that you feel proud of.
- Describe a challenge you have overcome within the last 3 months, and what you learned about yourself from the experience.
- What motivates you to do your best work?
- Think of a time you learned something new. What steps did you take to learn it? How can those strategies be used in your life right now?
- Think of a time you failed at something. How did it make you feel? In what ways did you grow from this experience?

### Heart-Centered Prompts

- What is something that you value/appreciate about yourself?
- What is something that happened this week that you are grateful for?
- What do you like to do for downtime/to decompress after a stressful day? Why?
- Who is someone in your life that you feel grateful for?
- In what ways are you taking care of your well-being?
- What do you need most to support your well-being this week?
- What is a something that you value about yourself that others may not know?
- If you *really* knew me, you would know that \_\_\_\_\_ (complete the sentence).
- How are you? How are you really?

### Get-to-Know-You Prompts

- What is your favorite comfort food and why?
- What is the story of your name?
- What is a pleasant memory from when you were younger?
- What is your favorite place and why?
- Others?

*\*Note that these prompts can be reflected on through drawing, movement and sound, in addition to the standard verbal expression.*

## Trauma-Responsive Spaces to Facilitate Reflection and Growth

Environmental safety is imperative in building trust, safety and minimizing re-traumatization of the individuals that are being served and the professionals who care for them. The following ideas can be incorporated in the classroom, in one-on-one sessions, workshops, offices, lounges and other communal spaces.

### Activities

- Self-Care Books
- Coloring book pages
- Crayons/ markers
- Passive programming for self-reflection (example: stick a giant post-it note to the wall containing a reflection question, i.e. "What do I love most about myself?" Invite people to write their responses on the sheet over a week.

### Self-Soothing Items

- Play dough
- Pipe cleaners
- Tangle toy
- Fidget toys
- Stuffed animals

### Ambiance and Mood

- Dim lighting
- Essential oil diffuser
- Inspired Art (framed pictures, murals)
- Plants of various sizes
- Water sounds/ soothing nature sounds
- Growth mindset quotes on the wall

### Self-Reflection Tools

- Affirmation Cards
- Color paper for drawing
- Journals or scrap paper for writing

### Creature Comforts

- Comfortable furniture set-up that promotes interaction and connection
- Mats for exercise, yoga or rest
- Meditation cushions
- Blankets
- Snacks / Water/ Tea



*Examples of items one can fidget with in order to discharge anxious or restless energy. Used in the right way, they can facilitate embodiment and learning.*

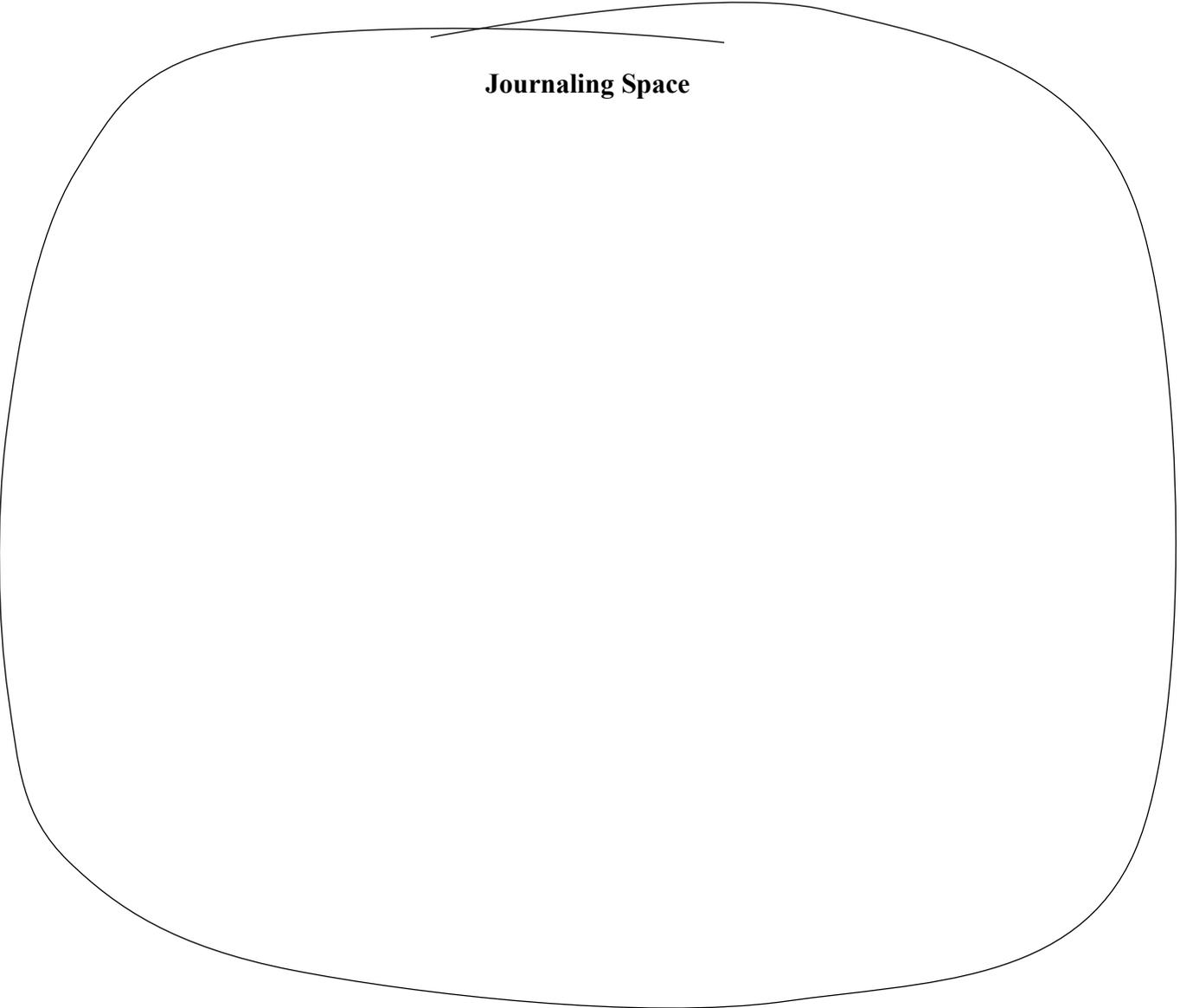
## **Mind Dump Journaling**

Use this self-reflection journaling strategy when stressed, scattered, or overwhelmed. “Mind dump” journaling is a way to discharge emotion, clear the mind, & become present.

### **Guidelines**

- ◆ Take a journal or piece of paper and writing utensil.
- ◆ Set a timer for how long you want to spend in this process. A timer can help to stay focused on the task. Start with 3 minutes! Over time you may want to increase the amount of time you spend.
- ◆ Start writing out whatever is in your thoughts, without censoring or trying to construct perfect sentences. Let the words come out as a stream of consciousness.
- ◆ Once complete, is not recommended that you re-read your journal writing. This helps the mind to move forward with a shifted focus.

**Journaling Space**





## Strategic Empathy Practice #2: Normalizing Statements

**Normalizing Statements:** A form of communication that helps one understand that their *feelings and reactions* to a particular situation are (usually) realistic responses to life situations, and are common among people in general

### Impact: Normalizing Statements...

- ◆ Keep focus on the person being supported
- ◆ Help reduce isolation
- ◆ Help one to be seen and heard (validation)
- ◆ Help de-escalate emotions
- ◆ Increase self-acceptance

### 3 Elements to Constructing Normalizing Statements

1. Keep focus on student (avoid “I” statements”)
2. Name the emotion
3. Restate/reference the situation

### Normalizing Statement Examples

- ◆ “It’s understandable that you feel upset that your professor is not giving you alternative options for turning in your paper.”
- ◆ “It’s reasonable to feel angry with your roommate for eating your food without telling you.”
- ◆ “It makes sense that you would feel anxious because of your current with your financial aid status.

### Normalizing Statement Sentence Starters

- ❖ It is understandable that you feel \_\_\_\_\_ (emotion) given the situation...
- ❖ It’s reasonable to respond in this way...
- ❖ It makes sense that you would feel \_\_\_\_\_ (emotion) as a result...
- ❖ \_\_\_\_\_ (emotion) is an appropriate emotion to feel after having that experience....
- ❖ Feelings of \_\_\_\_\_ (emotion) are a natural response to this type of situation...
- ❖ Many emotions can occur at once as a response to a situation like this. It is valid that you feel \_\_\_\_\_ (emotion)... “It’s understandable that you feel upset that your professor is not giving you alternative options for turning in your paper.”

### Tips for Normalizing

- ❖ Minimize the use of “I” statements. For example, instead of saying “I understand why you feel this way,” say “It’s reasonable that you feel confused given this situation.”
- ❖ Grow your emotional vocabulary so you can recognize and reflect back the nuanced emotional experience of someone that you’re working with.
- ❖ Turn up your *empathy*, or the ability to feel someone else’s situation, to help understand what someone is going through.

Adapted from *Fostering Success Coaching*. The Ctr for Fostering Success at Western MI University (2003)

### Practice Normalizing Statements

Write out a scenario from this week that you had a positive or negative reaction to. Construct a normalizing statement that validates the feeling that you experienced

Scenario	Normalizing Statements
<p><i>I'm Sameer and I got this message that my financial aid has a hold on it! I don't know what to do. I just paid my rent check, and I can't afford any fines. I am so upset. How could this have happened!?</i></p>	<p><i>Hi Sameer, thanks for letting me know what's going on with you. <b>It's understandable that you feel upset about the hold placed on your account.</b> Let me take a look and see how I can help you.</i></p>

## Strategic Empathy Practice #3: Effective Praise

**Effective Praise:** A targeted form of praise that seeks to identify, reinforce and link specific behaviors to a desired positive outcome. Helps students value their micro-efforts so that the behavior can be repeated and translated to other life domains in the future (regardless of the immediate “success” or “failure” of the effort). Promotes a growth mindset and boosts confidence.

3 Elements of Effective Praise	Examples
1. <b>Acknowledge:</b> Describe the <i>specific</i> behavior or quality you wish to reinforce	1. <b>Acknowledge:</b> “I hear that you felt confused about the material, and still you didn’t give up. You joined a study group and got help from the TA.”
2. <b>Impact:</b> What was the <i>benefit</i> of the behavior or quality?	2. <b>Impact:</b> “Because of your diligence, you accomplished something you never thought you could!”
3. <b>Encouragement:</b> Applaud <i>continued</i> use of the behavior or quality	3. <b>Encouragement:</b> “Your dedication is your greatest strength, Amir! Keep using it!”

Source: Darlene Mininni, PhD, MPH, Health Psychologist (2018)

Vague Praise	Effective Praise
You’re a natural at math.	Great job completing the assignment within the time frame. Your commitment to your goals is evident through your weekly study schedule.
You’re so smart.	I notice that you used two different resources to help you figure out these homework problems. Nice effort!
You’re a born writer.	Your writing shows that you have a unique way of telling a story. Great job dedicating time to exploring your craft.
Good work!	Good work writing this detailed paper! The extra time you took to work with your writing tutor proved so valuable!
Well done!	Well done performing at your dance recital. Your hours of practice paid off! When you commit to something look at how far you come!

Examples adapted from The Growth Mindset Coach, Annie Brock & Heather Hundley (2016)

### Tips for Effective Praise

- ❖ **Praise often!** Negative self-talk and fixed mindsets can be very powerful and take up a lot of space in the mind of an individual. Each time you offer a new “thought option” of praise, it can put a break in one’s thought pattern, and help them to grow.
- ❖ **Name the behavior:** Enthusiasm is part of praise, but it becomes *effective* when the specific action that led to the success is identified. Naming the behavior can help one understand that the behavior can be applied to other situations as well.
- ❖ **Grow skills:** If a situation that warrants praise also reveals areas for growth, develop awareness and skills around the area for growth. Consider this example: A student spends two days studying for an exam, and in the midst of it forgets to pay their rent again, thus creating a conflict with their roommate. Praise them for the effort taken in focusing on their work, while also engaging them in dialogue about finding balance and managing multiple responsibilities as part of *adulting*.

Adapted from *Fostering Success Coaching*. The Ctr for Fostering Success at Western MI University (2003)

### Practice Effective Praise

Think back to a situation from the last month that you navigated (positive or challenging). Then write an example of effective praise for the scenario using at least one of the elements above.

Scenario	Effective Praise
<p>I had a difficult conversation with my sibling that left me feeling exposed and uncertain of where we stand. I wanted to do it to help our relationship, but don’t know if it did.</p>	<p><i>Even though you feel uncertain, you took a risk and expressed something vulnerable. It took courage to bring it up because you value your relationship with your sibling. Authenticity is important for your well-being and for the relationship – good job.</i></p>

# Strategic Empathy Practice #4: Mindfulness, Meditation and Breathing

## Facilitating Meditation for Groups or Individuals Tips, Barriers and Accessibility

Meditation is a practice that can be done in silence, or with guidance from a facilitator (whether it is live or from a recording). When working with individuals or groups, meditation is a powerful strategy for reducing stress, enhancing resilience, promoting emotional regulation, connection, and thriving.

Facilitating a meditation or a mindful moment of deep breathing is a tool that anyone can offer, in a variety of situations. The following pages offer different types of guided meditation scripts for 3-10 minute meditations. In addition, there are scripts for facilitating mindful moments of breathing and reflection during one-on-one interactions in which one is emotionally triggered. Feel free to modify these scripts or create new ones to reflect your unique voice.

In addition to what is presented here, there are numerous free online resources and apps offering guided meditations with a variety of themes, including meditations for sleep, anxiety, sickness, exams, public speaking, etc. See the resource index for additional tools.

### 8 Tips for Facilitating Meditation

The skill to facilitate meditation is one that can be developed over time with practice, self-compassion and patience. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

1. **Practice meditating** in your personal time is key to any type of facilitation. It teaches you what the experience is of being in the moment, so that this feeling comes through in your facilitation.
2. **Slow down your pace of words and breath** when you facilitate meditation. Create space in between your words/phrases by taking deep breaths in between them. This helps the listener's mind and body to start to relax and slow down as well.
3. **Speak in a soothing voice** that arises from your abdomen, instead of your upper chest or nasal cavity. These lower tones of your voice create a soothing sound vibration that the listener can relax into.
4. **Music is optional** to play in the background. Soothing music helps elicit an emotional state of calm and ease, which is key to entering a deeper relaxed state. Choose music that is lyric free and has slow rhythms.
5. **Trust yourself.** Meditation facilitation is a process of learning how to *hold a quiet space* for another. The more you relax in your

#### Meditation Music Recommendations

- ◆ Moby's Long Ambients1: Calm. Sleep. Album available for free on [www.moby.com](http://www.moby.com).
- ◆ Pandora Stations: Marconi Union or Calm Meditation Radio

body and mind, letting go of perfection and the idea of doing it right, the more you give permission to others to relax. It's okay if you mess up the words. Let it go and keep breathing.

6. **Find your unique voice.** In the beginning, leading meditation can seem mechanical, especially if you are following a script. As you become more comfortable with the general guidelines of facilitation, allow your creativity to influence what you offer, including metaphors and visualizations that are meaningful to you. There is no right or wrong way to do it!
7. **Open yourself to the moment.** Meditation is a state of presence in which we open to the unknown. As you are present to the moment, the right words, feelings and transitions will come to you, and naturally everyone will benefit. Let go of thinking ahead to what comes next.
8. **Mitigate meditation barriers** in your facilitation. Apply a trauma-informed approach! When working with groups or individuals, assume that there will be someone who has experienced at least one type of major trauma in their lives. When facilitating meditation, it is important **give people choice** about how they can practice meditation. This will increase the likelihood of them integrating this skill into their unique life, creating a greater impact in the long-term.

**Here are some phrases that you can say when facilitating meditation:**

- ◆ *Take a posture that is comfortable for you*
- ◆ *Feel free to close the eyes during our meditation. If you'd prefer to keep the eyes open, feel free to do so while focusing at a steady point in front of you.*
- ◆ *Allow your breath to deepen to a place that feels comfortable for you today. If you notice that you get anxious when taking deep breaths, stay with your normal breath rhythm.*
- ◆ *If any part of what I say does not resonate with you or make sense, let go of the words, and simply stay with your breath.*
- ◆ *There is no right or wrong way to be in your meditation..*

### **Understanding Trauma and other Barriers to Accessing Meditation Practice**

- Some people prefer to keep the eyes open during meditation because they feel safer this way. For example, a veteran experiencing PTSD from their experience in combat may become triggered if their eyes are closed, making it even harder for the nervous system to relax.
- For someone who has experienced a body trauma such as sexual violence, taking deep breaths can be re-triggering. Therefore, invite participants to breathe in a way that feels comfortable to them.
- For someone who has a strong religious practice, meditation can seem to conflict with their beliefs, making the practice uncomfortable and undesirable. Have an open conversation about perceived barriers and invite the person to think of it as a way to engage more deeply with their religion, or as a form of contemplation, for example.
- For someone who experiences physical issues such as allergies, asthma, a chronic stuffy nose or feeling congested due to a cold, breathing deeply through the nose can be a challenge. Some meditations scripts state that one can breathe through the nose and out through the mouth. Offer this as a soft guideline, saying *you can breathe either through the nose or mouth, whatever is comfortable for you.*
- For some who has a challenging relationship with their body (for example a transgender person in the process of transitioning, or someone who has a physical disability), it may be difficult to focus on the body for relaxation. Remind practitioners that *there is no right or wrong way to be or feel; simply be present for your experience, without reacting or judging it.*

## Script: Deep Breathing Meditation

(foundation of a Mindfulness Practice)

1. Find a relaxed position in the body (sitting, reclined, standing).
2. Close the eyes if that feels comfortable to you. Otherwise they can be open, with a relaxed, focused gaze.
3. Draw your awareness to your natural breath. Notice the inhale and the exhale.
4. If you would like, you can place one palm over the belly button to anchor your awareness at this part of your body.
5. When you are ready, begin to deepen your breath. Inhale, slowly drawing the breath all the way in to the base of the lungs, the belly button extends out.
6. Pause at the top of your inhale, and then exhale, slowly releasing all the breath while pulling the belly button in toward spine.
7. Continue this deep breath, stretching the lungs to a point that feels comfortable, without causing strain in the body.
8. If your mind wanders, that is normal. Gently bring your awareness back to your breath.
9. Continue for 5-10 rounds of breath.
10. When you are ready, return your breath to a natural breath flow.
11. Stay connected to your body for as long as you can. Open the eyes.

*Mindfulness helps you go home to the present.*

-- Thich Nhat Hanh

*It is about being fully awake in our lives.  
It is about perceiving the exquisite vividness  
of each moment. We feel more alive.  
We also gain immediate access  
to our own powerful inner resources  
for insight, transformation, and healing.*

-- Joh Kabat Zinn, Ph.D.



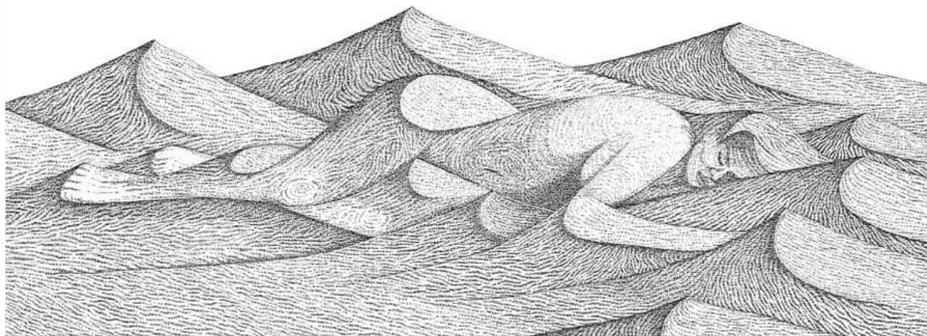
## Script: Body Relaxation Meditation

Take a comfortable posture in your body. You can be seated, or lie down and close your eyes, if that is comfortable for you. Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth. As you breathe in, relax your nostrils and imagine they are like two straws. Allow oxygen to flow in. As you breathe out, visualize your body releasing carbon dioxide. Fully fill your lungs with oxygen for 6 counts, then release the breath in 6 counts. Focus on breathing in and breathing out. Count 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, in; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, out.

Now feel that your head is heavy as if you were lying in sand. Let your head slowly sink . . . falling . . . falling . . . falling. Allow your eyebrows to relax; now your mouth relaxes while you breathe in and out. Your mind is on a train, and the thoughts are passing stations. Don't get stuck in a station for too long. Focus on breathing in and out. If you find yourself thinking too much or worrying, take a deep breath in, hold it and then let the air out while releasing that thought. Continue doing this until your mind is calm.

Let your head drop to the right. Feel the neck stretch on the left; repeat on the other side. Lie very still and feel yourself releasing any tension in your shoulders. Tense your shoulders, then relax them. Notice the contrast between the two conditions. Progressively follow your body internally as you allow your abdominal muscles to relax (if you find that hard, first tighten the muscles to feel the contrast). Keep your breathing fluid. Feel your thighs drop deeper into the sand; they are so heavy you can't even hold them any longer. Your knees and calf muscles relax, and now your feet limply slide into the sand.

Take a deep breath and own this totally relaxed feeling. Take another deep breath, and as you breathe out, say, "Aaaahhhh." Repeat this six times. Return to normal breathing and take a moment to recognize how you feel *right now*, so that later in the day, when you need to mirror this feeling, you will remember it and allow yourself to relax. Congratulate yourself for taking the time to unwind and become centered, focused, calm and more in tune with yourself.



Artist: Glen Scano, When Giants Fall (2013)

Source: [www.fineartamerica.com/featured/and-when-giants-fall-4-glenn-scano.html](http://www.fineartamerica.com/featured/and-when-giants-fall-4-glenn-scano.html)

## Incorporating Mindful Breathing into 1-1 Interactions

Mindfulness is a practice that can be done at home, work, in meetings and on breaks, for example. As an extended practice, it is designed to teach one how to find presence in the moments throughout the day. With consistent practice, the body learns to access a centered state of calm and peace in daily interactions. Modeling deep breathing as a practice for calming anxiety, triggers, and heightened emotions due to stress or trauma is powerful for nurturing daily resilience, holistic health, and long-term success. The following are examples in which mindfulness can be strategically incorporated in one-on-one interactions:

### Situation #1: Helping Student Feeling Anxiety by Modeling and Practicing Mindful Breathing

Student arrives in a heightened state of anxiety as evidenced in their body language and their tone of voice. They are facing a conflict with their care giver that is disrupting their emotional well-being. Before trying to problem-solve with them, it is important to support them in calming their fight-flight response that is activated in the brain/limbic system.

#### Strategy

- **State your observation:** Let student know what you notice about them with empathy: “It seems like you may be feeling some anxiety right now. Is that right?”
- **Provide them an option to calm down:** Would you like to take some deep breaths with me to relax before we talk about what’s going on?
- **Facilitate:** Get comfortable in your body, and feel free to close the eyes if you would like. When you’re ready, start to relax your body, and take a breath in... and then let it go. Let’s do this a few more times. (Repeat for 3-5 rounds).
- **Check in:** When you’re ready, open your eyes. How was that for you? What are you feeling?

### Situation #2: Helping Student who is Angry or Resistant by Mindful Breathing on your Own

Student appears to be angry about something. They have isolated themselves from the group and looks off into the distance as you inquire about what’s going on for them. They are reluctant to share anything verbally, and continue to demonstrate being frozen in their frustration. You feel concern and heightened desire to help them open up, especially as it is impacting the group dynamic.

#### Strategy

- **State your observation:** Let student know what you notice with empathy: “Hey, it seems that you’re upset about something. It’s okay if you don’t want to share more about what’s going on with you. (Meet the student where they are at!)”
- **Reduce the trigger by creating a supportive space:** Take some deep breaths and relax your body. Get grounded. The student may still remain silent, but on an unconscious level they will sense that you are comfortable with where they are at, thereby creating a safe space in which they can be in their emotion. You can stay with them in silence, continuing to relax your own body, and/or let them know that you are here for them if they choose to talk to you about what is bothering them.
- **Return to the group,** staying relaxed, while allowing for the upset student’s emotions to be included as part of the space. Maintain the mindset that *there is no right or wrong way to be*, and that *all parts of you are welcome here*.

### **Situation #3: Using Mindfulness to Help Someone make a Difficult Choice for Themselves**

Student arrives feeling overwhelmed and confused about whether to break up with an intimate partner. There are many complexities to take into consideration, and they express that this situation is impacting their ability to focus on school. As they share their story, you feel compassion for them and want to help. Before jumping into problem solving mode, take a couple of moments to guide the person into a mindful state. This will calm anxious thoughts so that they can then move toward the next micro-step.

#### **Strategy**

- **State your observation:** Let student know what you notice with empathy and authenticity: “It sounds like this is a really tough choice that you are facing right now.”
- **Provide them an option to go inside and gain clarity:** I’m wondering if you would be willing to take some deep breaths. This can help you relax your mind so that you can tune in and hear what your options are, and then make a choice from there that is best for you. How does that sound?
- **Facilitate:** Get comfortable in your body, and feel free to close the eyes if you would like. When you’re ready, start to relax your body, and take a breath in... and then let it go. Let’s do this a few more times. (Repeat for 3-5 rounds). As you relax, tune in to the choices that you are facing. *State: Choice A and Choice B out loud for them.* What internal response do you notice with each choice?
- **Check in:** When you’re ready open your eyes. What did you notice internally as you tuned in to each option? What feels like the right choice for you in this situation? *(If they don’t have clarity, it is ok! The next step may take a little time to become clear).*

### **Situation #4: Managing your Well-being when Impacted by a Case**

Often, when working with another person who is experiencing distress and/or the effects of trauma, their story may trigger your emotions. You may recall similar emotional experiences from your own life, or you may absorb the difficult emotions of their experience, with an urgency to “fix” (known as *emotional or cognitive contagion*). Over time, this can lead to compassion fatigue, or a burning out of your capacity to empathize. It is imperative to practice mindfulness throughout the day, to maintain your own well-being as a support person.

#### **Reflect**

- What are internal indicators that you are experiencing emotional or cognitive contagion?
- Recognize when this happens and choose to “loop your awareness” or shift your attention to something in the present moment, including your breath, your feet to ground, colors in the space around you. Note that this micro-shift in your awareness does not take away from being present with the person you are supporting.

#### **Reflection**

What are other situations in which you can apply mindfulness practices into your daily interactions? What are other strategies for you to stay present while triggered?

# About Meditation & Deep Breathing

## What is it?

Meditation is a practice that...

- ◆ Has been around for thousands of years in different cultures & traditions
- ◆ Became popularized in the United States in the 1960's
- ◆ Teaches one how to become familiar with the PRESENT moment
- ◆ Has been scientifically proven to develop resilience and healthy adaptation to life challenges
- ◆ Promotes awareness, insight, and well-being
- ◆ Is not necessarily affiliated with a particular religion or spirituality; can be a part of or complementary to these practices
- ◆ Shifts perspective and develops a growth mindset

To learn more about the history of meditation, visit: [www.chopra.com/articles/history-meditation](http://www.chopra.com/articles/history-meditation)

## Benefits of Meditation

There are many evidence-based benefits to the long-term practice of meditation, including:

- ◆ Decreases stress
- ◆ Enhances physical, emotional, and mental health
- ◆ Reduces heart rate and blood pressure
- ◆ Reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety
- ◆ Enhances sense of well-being
- ◆ Enhances mental clarity and focus
- ◆ Helps to manage fear by switching the fight-flight-freeze-faint (sympathetic) response to one of ease and calm (parasympathetic)
- ◆ Improves memory
- ◆ Decreases physical and emotional pain
- ◆ Helps heal trauma
- ◆ Increases compassion for self and others
- ◆ Increases life contentment and peace
- ◆ Increases resilience

## Situations for use

Meditation or deep breathing can be practiced in a variety of situations. Here are a few examples:

- ◆ To set one's mindset for the day, when practiced in the morning
- ◆ When restless or bored in class (take deep breaths)
- ◆ Anxious prepping for a major deadline
- ◆ Overwhelmed with stressors
- ◆ When experiencing negative thinking such as critical thoughts
- ◆ Before or during a difficult conversation
- ◆ In class, before an exam or presentation
- ◆ When walking from one class to the next

## Internal Indicators for use

- ◆ Fight, flight, freeze, faint response triggered
- ◆ Feel ungrounded, lethargic, disconnected
- ◆ Feel overwhelmed, scattered, unfocused
- ◆ Feel unsafe, confused, scared, anxious
- ◆ Racing thoughts, distracted mind

*It is about being fully awake in our lives.  
It is about perceiving the exquisite vividness  
of each moment. We feel more alive.  
We also gain immediate access  
to our own powerful inner resources  
for insight, transformation, and healing.  
-- Joh Kabat Zinn, Ph.D.*

## When to do it?

- ◆ It is most often recommended to practice meditation in the morning (helps with optimistic mindset for the day) or before going to sleep for the night (helps with a deep, relaxing sleep).
- ◆ Meditation and deep breathing can be practiced throughout the day and integrated into various activities.
- ◆ Meditation can be practiced in long blocks of time (such as 5-30 minutes for regular practice), or it can be practiced in 1-2 minutes to help with staying centered throughout the day.

## How to do it?

- ◆ Take a seated posture (in chair with feet to ground, or sitting on ground with legs crossed, or sit against the wall for back support. In addition, one can lie on the ground. .
- ◆ Elongate the spine, allowing for lungs and diaphragm to expand when breathing.
- ◆ Long slow breaths (ideally through the nose) into and out of the abdomen without creating a strain in the lungs
- ◆ Relax the thoughts in the mind, letting them come and go, without judgment or control.
- ◆ Note that it is a misconception to STOP the thoughts in the mind. In fact this is nearly impossible, because thoughts are simply neural firings in the brain that occur automatically. Instead, focus on changing your relationship to thoughts in the mind by allowing them to be as they are, while re-shifting your awareness to the breath.
- ◆ Music (instrumental or with a guided meditation recording) is optional to stimulate activation of positive emotions.

## Types of Meditation

- ◆ Guided
- ◆ Silent
- ◆ Sitting
- ◆ Visualization (journey to a place, light, color)
- ◆ Body Scan
- ◆ Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- ◆ Walking
- ◆ Standing
- ◆ Moving
- ◆ Sound

## Systems of Meditation

There are many organized systems of meditation developed by teachers that have gained momentum over the last several years. Some of these include:

- ◆ Transcendental Meditation
- ◆ Buddhist Meditation
- ◆ Vipassana Meditation
- ◆ Forgiveness Meditation
- ◆ Mantra Meditation
- ◆ Sufi Meditation
- ◆ Kabbalah Meditation
- ◆ Art of Living Meditation

## How often to meditate?

- ◆ Great to do daily for 10 minutes or so... but realistically, set yourself up to succeed. Start with 2-3 times per week for 5-10 minutes. Increase your practice as you become more comfortable with it.
- ◆ Do it when you are in class for 1-2 min, do it on a lunch break for 5 minutes. The act of taking a conscious moment to tune in and get present is always beneficial to your body system.

## Troubleshooting the Meditation Practice

- ◆ *I fell asleep*: very normal in beginning of meditation practice because the body is used to sleeping when slowing down. Over time, the desire to sleep will decrease (unless you are genuinely tired!) and you will be able to stay conscious while relaxed throughout the meditation.
- ◆ *My mind didn't quiet down and became louder*: great awareness if you noticed this. Let your experience be as it is and simply witness. With practice over time, the mind will calm down quickly. And some days meditation is more relaxing than others, depending on what's going on in your life. Every time you practice is valuable, regardless of the outcome.
- ◆ *I was so distracted*: meditation is a life-long practice. Each session will be different, some deeper than others. Whatever your experience is, simply allow it to be without judgment.
- ◆ *I couldn't breathe that deeply*: very normal especially as a beginner; breathing muscles will get stronger and more open as you practice deep breathing. Give it time.
- ◆ *My back started to hurt*: support yourself with a pillow under your hips, back to wall, or lie down.
- ◆ *I don't have a quiet room*: Find another place to do it. For example, take some mindful breaths when you take a shower or walk to any destination. Or sit outside and practice.

### Reflection

Meditation is a practice that teaches us how to be in the present in our day-to-day experiences. Think back to a time when you were really *present* – a feeling of “being in the zone” – where you were connected to what you were doing, and there was a feeling of timelessness and flow. Describe in detail what this experience was like.

### Self-Assessment

What is your experience of meditation thus far? What are some concerns you have regarding a meditation practice? What are some things you are curious about regarding a meditation practice?



## Free Meditation Audio Tracks

### **Meditations by Nikita Gupta**

Soundcloud.com

<https://soundcloud.com/user-690336964>

### **Audio Meditations from**

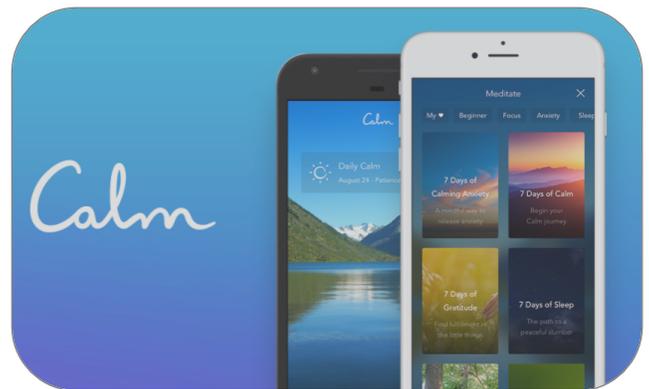
**UCLA Mindful Awareness Resource Center (MARC)**

<http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations>



## Mindfulness Apps

- ❖ Insight Timer (FREE)  
Large library of free guided meditations with customizable meditation timer
- ❖ Calm App (FREE)  
Listen to guided meditation tracks, sensory bedtime stories for sleep, soothing music.
- ❖ Stop, Breathe, Think App (FREE)  
Learn about and practice meditation using guided meditation tracks.
- ❖ Buddhify (\$2.99)  
Mindfulness app that has over 80 guided meditations custom-made for wherever you are and whatever you're doing – traveling, at work, at home, going to sleep and much more.
- ❖ Sleep Cycle (\$0.99)  
An alarm clock tracks your sleep patterns and wakes you up during light sleep. Waking up during light sleep feels like waking up naturally rested without an alarm clock. Wake up feeling good instead of groggy!
- ❖ Smiling Mind (FREE)  
App designed to help bring balance to young lives. This app has a tool that assesses how you feel before and after the meditation.
- ❖ Gratitude Journal App (FREE)  
Rewire your brain by a regular practice of gratitude (actively putting attention on what is going well in your life!)
- ❖ Omvana (FREE)  
Guided meditation tracks for all practice levels (beginners to advanced).
- ❖ Pacifica App(FREE)  
Record your emotions and mood throughout the day. Receive reminders to check in to your well-being. Designed to reduce anxiety and depression.
- ❖ Headspace App (\$6-\$15/month)  
Popular meditation app that offers guided meditations, animations, articles and videos related to managing stress
- ❖ Penzu Online Journal (FREE)  
Private online journal that lets you type out the thoughts and emotions you are experiencing and get them out of your body system. Customize your journals, and create different ones for different topics



## Index of Resources

### Grit, Resilience and Growth Mindset Resources

#### Literature

- ❖ Gross, Karen. *Breakaway Learners: Strategies for Post-Secondary Success with At-Risk Students*. (2017). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- ❖ Dweck, C. *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (2006)
- ❖ Duckworth, A. *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* (2016)
- ❖ Yeager, DS and Dweck, (2012). Mindsets that Promote Resilience: When Students Believe That Personal Characteristics Can Be Developed. *Educational Psychologist*, 47(4), 302-314
- ❖ Gray, P. (2015). Declining Student Resilience: A Serious Problem for Colleges. *Psychology Today*. Source: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/freedom-learn/201509/declining-student-resilience-serious-problem-colleges>
- ❖ Singal, J. (2015). The Myth of the Ever-More-Fragile College Student. *Science of Us*. New York Magazine. Source: <http://nymag.com/scienceofus/2015/11/myth-of-the-fragile-college-student.html>
- ❖ Kohn, A. (2014). Ten concerns about the ‘let’s teach them grit’ fad. *The Washington Post*. source: [www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/04/08/ten-concerns-about-the-lets-teach-them-grit-fad](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/04/08/ten-concerns-about-the-lets-teach-them-grit-fad)
- ❖ Jackson, R. (2010). Start Where Your Students Are. *Educational Leadership*. 67(5), 6-10. Source: [www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb10/vol67/num05/Start-Where-Your-Students-Are.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb10/vol67/num05/Start-Where-Your-Students-Are.aspx)
- ❖ Chambers, M. (2015). Sorting out Resilience, Perseverance and Grit. *Building Learning Power: Outstanding Learning for Life*. Source: [www.buildinglearningpower.com/2015/11/sorting-out-resilience-perseverance-and-grit](http://www.buildinglearningpower.com/2015/11/sorting-out-resilience-perseverance-and-grit)
- ❖ Price-Mitchell, M. (2015). Does Your Classroom Cultivate Student Resilience? *Edutopia*. Source: [www.edutopia.org/blog/8-pathways-cultivate-student-resilience-marilyn-price-mitchell](http://www.edutopia.org/blog/8-pathways-cultivate-student-resilience-marilyn-price-mitchell)
- ❖ Good, A. (2015). If the going gets tough, when should the tough give up? *University of Southern California Press Room*. Source: [www.news.usc.edu/87122/if-the-going-gets-tough-when-should-the-tough-give-up/](http://www.news.usc.edu/87122/if-the-going-gets-tough-when-should-the-tough-give-up/)

## Video

- ❖ Stanford: The Resilience Project. Source: <https://vptl.stanford.edu/resilience-project>
- ❖ TED Talk: The Key to Success? Grit with Angela Lee Duckworth  
Source: [www.ted.com/talks/angela\\_lee\\_duckworth\\_the\\_key\\_to\\_success\\_grit?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_the_key_to_success_grit?language=en)
- ❖ Stanford: The Resilience Project. Source: <https://vptl.stanford.edu/resilience-project>
- ❖ TED Talk: The Key to Success? Grit with Angela Lee Duckworth  
Source: [www.ted.com/talks/angela\\_lee\\_duckworth\\_the\\_key\\_to\\_success\\_grit?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_the_key_to_success_grit?language=en)

## Podcast

- ❖ Hidden Brain Podcast. Episode 26: Grit  
Source: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/hidden-brain/id1028908750?mt=2#episodeGuid=0a7b7526-f9c2-4665-9162-b1d069668774>

## Self-Care and Mindfulness Resources

### Literature

- ❖ Jacobs, Tom. (2015). Evidence Mounts that Mindfulness Breeds Resilience. Greater Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life. Source: [www.greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/evidence\\_mounts\\_that\\_mindfulness\\_breeds\\_resilience](http://www.greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/evidence_mounts_that_mindfulness_breeds_resilience)
- ❖ Siegel, Daniel J. (2009). Mindful Awareness, Mindsight, and Neural Integration. The Humanistic Psychologist, 37(2), 137-158.
- ❖ Goh, Crystal. (2017). Your Breath is Your Brain's Remote Control. Mindful: Taking Time for What Matters. Source: <https://www.mindful.org/breath-brains-remote-control>
- ❖ Bourne, Edmund. (2015). The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook, 6th ed. Oakland, Calif: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.
- ❖ Levine, Peter A. 1997. Waking the tiger: healing trauma: the innate capacity to transform overwhelming experiences. Berkeley, Calif: North Atlantic Books.

### University Resources

- ❖ UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC)  
Source: [www.marc.ucla.edu](http://www.marc.ucla.edu)
- ❖ The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education. Stanford.  
Source: [www.ccare.stanford.edu](http://www.ccare.stanford.edu)
- ❖ Greater Good Magazine: Science-Based Insights for a Meaningful Life. UC Berkeley.  
Source: <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/>

## Audio Resources

- ❖ Meditations by Nikita Gupta on Soundcloud.com (Free)  
Source: <https://soundcloud.com/user-690336964>
- ❖ Guided Meditations (Audio Files). UCLA MARC Center (Free)  
Source: <http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22>

## Video

- ❖ Docter, Pete, Ronnie Del Carmen, Meg LeFauve, Josh Cooley, Jonas Rivera, Amy Poehler, Phyllis Smith, et al. (2015). Inside Out. (Feature Length Film)
- ❖ 4-7-8 Breath Exercise with Dr. Andrew Weil  
Source: [www.drweil.com/videos-features/videos/breathing-exercises-4-7-8-breath/](http://www.drweil.com/videos-features/videos/breathing-exercises-4-7-8-breath/)

## Training Programs

- ❖ Thriving on Campus Resilience Coaching Program with Nikita Gupta  
Info: <http://www.nikitagupta.com/>

## Trauma-Informed Approach and Social Justice Resources

### Literature

- ❖ Student Mental Health Program: Training and Technical Assistance for California Community Colleges. Foundation for California Community Colleges.  
<http://www.cccstudentmentalhealth.org>.
- ❖ SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. (2014). <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/SAMHSA-s-Concept-of-Trauma-and-Guidance-for-a-Trauma-Informed-Approach/SMA14-4884>
- ❖ The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. CDC.gov. Atlanta, Georgia: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention. May 2014. Archived from the original on 27 December 2015.
- ❖ The Sanctuary Model (2013). The Sanctuary Model: An integrated theory. Retrieved March 5, 2013 from <http://www.sanctuaryweb.com/sanctuary-model.php>.
- ❖ Healing Justice Practice Spaces: A How-To Guide. Source:  
<https://justhealing.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/healing-justice-practice-spaces-a-how-to-guide-with-links.pdf>
- ❖ Tips for College Students: After a Disaster or Other Trauma. Source:  
<http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA13-4777/SMA13-4777.pdf>

- ❖ Sue, Derald DW, Capodilupo, Christina, et. al. (2007). Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice. American Psychologist. Vol. 62, No. 4, 271-8
- ❖ Tool: Recognizing Microaggressions and the Messages They Send. UCSC Academic Affairs. Source: [https://academicaffairs.ucsc.edu/events/documents/Microaggressions\\_Examples\\_Arial\\_2014\\_11\\_12.pdf](https://academicaffairs.ucsc.edu/events/documents/Microaggressions_Examples_Arial_2014_11_12.pdf)
- ❖ Jones, and McEwen. (2000). Conceptual Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity. Journal of College Student Development. 41(4): 405-14.
- ❖ Mark Gerzon, John Steiner, and Ben Levi (2005). Debate, Dialogue and Empathetic Discourse. Source: <http://ncdd.org/rc/item/5394>

### Video

- ❖ Cultural Humility: People, Principles and Practices (30 min documentary)  
Source: <youtu.be/SaSHLbS1V4w>
- ❖ TED Talk: The danger of a single story with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie  
Source: [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story)

### Training Programs

- ❖ Lee Mun Wah. Stir Fry Seminars & Consulting: Innovative Tools for Diversity Training  
Website: <http://www.stirfryseminars.com/>  
*Excellent resource for training, written materials, and films on finding compassion and healing through skillful, mindful dialogue on racism and sexism.*
- ❖ National Intergroup Dialogue Institute. University of Michigan.  
Website: <https://igr.umich.edu/about/institute>