

BEING PRESENT, SUPPORTING PRESENCE: HANDOUT

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Practices to help you get present before an event

- [Phil Boissiere: 30 seconds to mindfulness](#)
- [5-4-3-2-1 practice](#)
- The physiological sigh: two short inhales through the nose, then a long exhale through the mouth. Repeat once or twice to calm the nervous system.
- Take a short walk or do some mindful stretching or yoga
- Bring along ancestors or teachers (see King, 2021)

Opening activity ideas

- Observe a moment of silence or meditation.
- Read a poem. In our session, we read "[Keeping Quiet](#)" by Pablo Neruda (trans. Alastair Reid).
- Duffy et al. (2021) noted a class "watching a video of Lucille Clifton ... and using it as an opportunity to collectively mind map research concepts."
- Get situated in the space via senses: noticing sights or sounds, or looking intentionally at the screen and online meeting software features.
- Mirroring movements: with cameras on, ask everyone in the group to pick a simple movement to do, then ask people to switch and do a movement someone else was doing, then switch a few more times. This can be a good way to lighten things up!
- With cameras on, ask everyone to look at another person's zoom rectangle, and focus on that person as a full human being for a full breath cycle, then switch to another person; repeat.

Check-in question ideas

- How's your day going?
- How's the weather where you are?
- Share something bringing you joy.
- What's a mundane everyday skill that you could win an Olympic gold medal in?

Closing activity ideas

- Offer a few moments of silence
- Offer a writing prompt for personal reflection. E.g., "This meeting required some emotional energy today. Let's take one full minute to write down at least one thing we might do to help ourselves recharge."
- Lead or listen to a guided meditation
- Read a poem, look at a piece of art, or listen to a piece of music
- Visualize something just learned (Example: [chemistry meditation videos](#))
- Do a checkout round

Checkout question ideas

- What is something you learned today that surprised you?
- What is something you are taking away from our time together?
- What is one thing that's clear to you now and one thing that is muddy?
- What are some connections you've made as a result of being on this committee? How are you using those in other parts of your work?

Establishing values and norms

- For ongoing groups, norms can be set collaboratively, but if you have a one-time event, you as the facilitator can suggest some guidelines and ask attendees if they agree to follow them. "What guidelines can we agree on now in order to create a learning environment in which we can... [insert desired learning space characteristic(s): ask one another anything, ask brave questions, etc.]"
- Frame norms as specific behaviors. "Listen respectfully" is vague and difficult to enforce. More specific norms could be "We don't interrupt when others are speaking" or "We use circle order so that only one person is speaking at a time."
- Consider whether there are specific norms around technology use that would help with presencing
 - Cameras on vs. cameras off: While some specific learning tasks or presencing activities may benefit from having cameras on, research from Stanford has also shown that too much use of video can fatigue humans (Ramachandran, 2021 summarizes Bailenson, 2021). Specifically, "the amount of eye contact we engage in on video chats, as well as the size of faces on screens is unnatural"; self-view is taxing; video chats reduce our usual mobility; and the cognitive load is much higher. Consider inviting your students/participants to turn their cameras off and on, and let them know why.
 - Decide on and state how you'd like to use chat for participation, so participants know where to focus. Some options include:
 - Asking people to generally refrain from using chat except at explicit moments
 - Welcoming chat, but pausing to read all comments in the chat out loud so those participations are given fuller attention, especially if you have folks joining through phone
 - Suggesting the use of chat for large group expression in response to prompts
 - Can apply technology norms to specific parts of a gathering; e.g., asking attendees to not use chat during a reflection activity to allow everyone space to focus on their own reflection

Technical Considerations

- If using Live Transcript, explain how to turn subtitles on and off.
- If you plan to use breakout rooms, let people know that at the beginning of the event, and whether they're required or optional.
- When sharing your screen, make a slow transition to allow people time to arrange windows, and also give yourself grace to get situated – don't feel like you need to rush as you bring up your slides. Give tips like

- Using ESC to get out of full screen so people can view handouts or take notes at the same time
- Switching to [side-by-side gallery view in Zoom](#) to see more videos along with a shared screen
- Chat can be used to reassure folks about start and end times for asynchronous work or for breaks, like “take until 2:49 to read ____”. When you come back, say “Would anyone appreciate more time to read ____?”
- For circle, the host can use Zoom’s Gallery View to click and drag videos to [create a custom video order](#) that can be deployed to all participants, and even be saved for future use!

Supporting Attendees’ Presence

- Research suggests that adult attention begins to decrease after the first 10-15 minutes of a presentation, and toward the end of an hour-long session, attention loss happens more quickly: every 3-4 minutes (Mittendorf & Kalish, 1996). Chunking your content into sections interspersed by a “brain break” can not only support attention, one study showed that it aids in learning retention (Murphy, 2008).
- Gibson and Regan (2021) suggest the idea of having students explore primary documents mindfully as part of the research context, being present with them similar to beholding a work of art or studying a piece of food (p. 268).

References and Further Resources

Circle Process

- Pranis, K. (2005). *The little book of circle processes: A new/old approach to peacemaking*. Good Books.
- Ways of Council. (n.d.). <https://waysofcouncil.net/>

Class Activities Incorporating Contemplative Practices / Mindfulness

- Vitha, M. F. (2022). Contemplative Fridays: Mindfulness pedagogy in the general chemistry classroom. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 99(7), 2441–2445. <https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.jchemed.2c00159>. Innovative approach using mindfulness and visualization of chemical systems.
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Contemplative Practice / Mindfulness in Libraries

- Gibson, N. S., & Regan, M. T. (2021). On the journey to a contemplative library: Reflections from a professional community of practice. *International Information & Library Review*, 53(3), 264–271. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10572317.2021.1949523>
- Charney, M., Colvin, J., & Moniz, R. (Eds.). (2019). *Recipes for mindfulness in your library: Supporting resilience and community engagement*. ALA Editions.

Reflective Practice / Contemplative Pedagogy

- Booth, C. (2011). Metacognition and reflective practice. In *Reflective teaching, effective learning: Instructional literacy for library educators*. ALA Editions.

- Brown, R. C., Simone, G., & Worley, L. (2016). Embodied presence: Contemplative teacher education. In K. A. Schonert-Reichl & R. W. Roeser (Eds.), *Handbook of mindfulness in education: Integrating theory and research into practice* (pp. 207–219). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-3506-2_13

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- Murphy, M. (2008). Matching workplace training to adult attention span to improve learner reaction, learning score, and retention. *Journal of Instruction Delivery Systems*, 22(2), 6–13.
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- ----. (n.d.). This moment is perfect. *Lion's Roar*. <https://www.lionsroar.com/the-moment-is-perfect/>
- Ramachandran, V. (2021, February 3). Four causes for 'Zoom fatigue' and their solutions. *Stanford News*. <https://news.stanford.edu/2021/02/23/four-causes-zoom-fatigue-solutions/>