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What Does it Mean for a Teacher to Bring the Whole Person to the Classroom? Reflections and Strategies to Access the Authentic Self And Connect with the Energy of Joy in the Classroom Learning Experience

Arline M. H. Saturdayborn
SIT Graduate Institute

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What Does it Mean for a Teacher to Bring the Whole Person to the Classroom?

Reflections and Strategies to Access the Authentic Self

And

Connect with the Energy of Joy in the Classroom Learning Experience

Arline M. H. Saturdayborn

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Master of Arts in TESOL degree

at SIT Graduate Institute

Brattleboro, Vermont.

July 2015

Advisor: Dr. Susan Barduhn

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Student name: ___Arline Saturdayborn _____ Date: _July 19, 2015

Abstract

Since I began teaching 10 years ago, I have been summoned by an energy, a vitality that is guiding me. Most days when I walk into the classroom, no matter what is going on in my life, I connect with an energy that makes my heart feel full, brings my whole body alive and fills me with joy. This thesis is an investigation of what I experience when I enter the classroom. I love the energy I have in the classroom. I don't think it is special to me. I think this energy is available to anyone, if they are willing to do the work. Using the lens of David Kolb's experiential learning cycle, I tell the stories of some experiences in my life, and what I have learned from them. This learning has led me to practices that, used over time, have helped me to access a vitality that has changed my classrooms and my life. At its core these practices are about welcoming the unwelcome parts of ourselves. When we can bring kindness to our darkest side, we become agents of peace in the world. I believe that any teacher can use this and transform their classrooms. I developed a five-week experiment for teachers to see if brief, regular practices could cultivate a sense of joy in the classroom. My goal was to offer small, easy-to-use, specific skills that practiced on a daily basis, could make a positive difference in teachers' lives. In this thesis I share ways and practices that teachers can use to increase their personal joy and vitality, enrich the vibrancy of their classrooms and fill their students with self-love and love of learning. This is the fruit of self-knowledge.

ERIC Descriptors:

Communication skills

Listening skills

Caring skills

Teacher attitudes

Teacher behavior

Teacher education

Creative teaching

Cultural influences

Self knowledge

Awareness

Mindfulness

Energy

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Introduction

“Teachers and students bring their entire selves into the classroom; we therefore need to understand who we are and what we bring... before we can holistically teach the language” (Dennis, 2010, p. 17).

In this paper, I look at painful experiences in my life that have helped me understand who I am and what I bring to the classroom. Each experience has led to increased understanding and acceptance of what it means to bring my entire self to the classroom. Because of these experiences, I developed skills and practices that transformed the pain. As it turns out these very skills are what impact the quality and abundance of energy in my teaching and my life. Much of my journey towards authenticity has involved working with and learning to be with the shadow part of myself. We all have a dark side. We don't want anger, resentment and chaos to be in charge when we are creating a learning environment. The question is how do we hold that dark side in the classroom. We can ignore it, with often undesirable consequences. We can suppress it which takes a lot of effort. Or we can look at it to find the wisdom it holds that can be put toward enriching our classroom. I offer insights from my life experiences that have helped me discover wisdom in my muddiness. These have enhanced the quality and quantity of energy that I bring to my teaching. My hope is that some readers will find these practices personally helpful and will be encouraged to investigate their own uncomfortable parts of themselves with compassion.

Using the experiential learning cycle (ELC) shown below and as described by David Kolb in *Experiential Learning* (Kolb, 1984), I describe several of my life experiences. I give my observations and reflections on the experience, the learning, and the action that came from the reflection and learning.

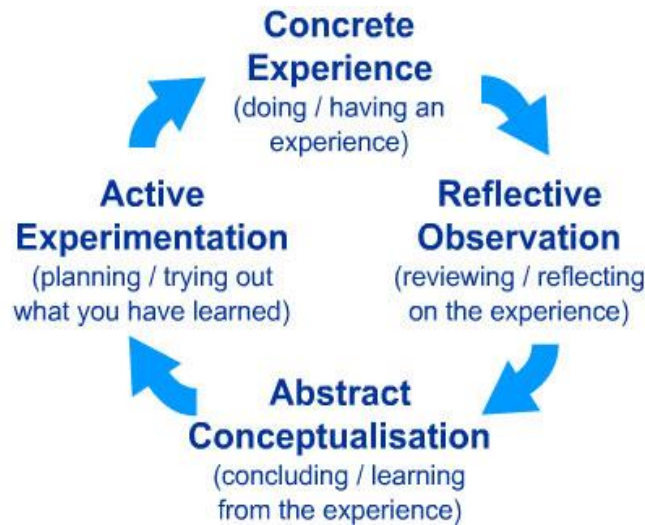


Figure 1: Experiential Learning Cycle. Adapted from Kolb (1984).

Following some of the experiences, I offer a practice that the reader can try. These practices have become essential parts of my daily life. They inform the quality and quantity of energy I bring to my classroom.

My teaching is in constant dialogue with my learning. Each class is a discrete learning experience from which, with reflection, I gain new insight. I look at my classes as learning experiences because I look at my life as a learning experience. My experience at SIT helped me to recognize and value an essential part of my nature: a passion to learn, not for the accumulation of knowledge, but for the energy and excitement of the process. As David Kolb writes:

We are thus the learning species, and our survival depends on our ability to adapt not only in the reactive sense of fitting into the physical and social worlds, but in the proactive sense of creating and shaping those worlds ...

Our species long ago left the harmony of nonreflective union with the “natural” order to embark on an adaptive journey of its own choosing. With this choosing

has come responsibility for a world that is increasingly of our own creation

(Kolb, 1984, p.1).

My part in this creation is ESOL teaching and sharing what I have learned with other teachers. I believe teaching is peace in action. We all have the responsibility and opportunity to make our classroom and our lives count towards the creation of peace.

Growing up, my educational experience trained me to look for the right answer. I married into a family for whom being right is important. I loved what I saw as their intellectualism and rationalism. I was embarrassed by my inability to prove my own leaps of intuition and understandings that came from *my bodily-felt experience*. I was comfortable with not-knowing. When I married, I put myself in a tension between provable rationalism and my own experiential knowing that included a comfort with and acceptance of not knowing. In reading Kolb, I realized that I gave myself the perfect dialectic to facilitate my learning. Kolb helped give me a language that I intuitively knew. I now understand that I live outside the belief that there is a right answer and that rationalism is supreme. I see this paper as an opportunity to explore what I have learned and examine the practices that have enabled me to connect with a soulful vitality. It is also a chance for me to face fears about writing from my own personal experience. In the act of writing this thesis I am following Eleanor Roosevelt's encouragement.

You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.' You must do the thing you think you cannot do
(Roosevelt, 1960, p.29-30).

I draw from the work of David Kolb and the pioneers he acknowledges before him: Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, Jung and Carl Rogers,

In the overeager embrace of the rational, scientific, and technological, our concept of the learning process itself was distorted first by rationalism and later by behaviorism. We lost touch with our own experience as the source of personal learning and development and, in the process, lost the experiential centeredness necessary to counterbalance the loss of “scientific” centeredness that has been progressively slipping away since Copernicus (Kolb, 1984, p.2).

I am writing this for teachers. Most people who go into teaching are deeply caring and many get burned out. They often blame themselves and leave the profession because they have not been systematically taught the skills for self-care and receiving care. A course in personal energy renewal and conservation is hard to find in teacher-training curricula.

I began my research for this IPP with a seven-day silent retreat in the Dzochon Tibetan tradition. I wanted to study and practice ways to connect with the energy I have felt in the classroom. After two months of engaging with the teachings from the retreat, I developed an experiment to offer these practices to other teachers. It was designed to explore this question: what is the smallest amount of time a person can invest in practicing a skill on a daily basis and realize a positive change in their lives? I conducted this study at my school to see if a small investment of time could help nourish a teacher’s work in the classroom and lessen the negative effects of stress in their lives. I conclude this paper with a description of the five-week experiment and some of the participants’ feedback.

Chapter One: My Experience With Joy in the Classroom

“Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God.”

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Ten years ago when my last child entered college, I was searching for something meaningful to do with my life. I had been teaching yoga and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) for 10 years. I enjoyed that work, but I was looking for something more. One day, while journaling in a local coffee shop, I had a conversation with a friend that led me to Portland Adult Education (PAE) where I became a classroom volunteer.

My first class was in February 2005 with low intermediate students from all over the world. As I joined them in the intensity of their struggle to learn a new language, I was filled with an energy that made me feel alive and seemed to give me direction.

This was the meaningful work I was looking for. Now, I needed to get the training. Almost as if enchanted, I went through all the steps to get into the Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA) program. After the four-week CELTA training, I returned to Portland to see if I could get a job at PAE. I was starving to learn in the classroom. There was an opening for a class in literacy. I took it, and for the next three years, I taught every class I could. I volunteered in classes with experienced teachers to learn from them. I could not understand what caused this feeling of joy, what impelled me to learn, to work to understand the material. I was amazed by the energy that was available to me. Often, I stayed up until two or three in the morning to prepare a class for the next day.

Every June, PAE has a graduation ceremony for the students who have earned their high school diploma. It is always an inspiring program. There are people who left high school as

teenage dropouts and return to complete their studies as adults. There are refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and graduates of the homeless teen shelter. In my second year at PAE, the student speaker at graduation was a young woman who had gotten her degree while she was completing a jail sentence. She ended her speech saying, “I am not going to tell you how to make the world a better place. I am going to paraphrase Howard Thurman and tell you to find what it is that makes you feel fully alive and do that with all your heart and soul because what the world needs is more people who are fully alive.” I realized I had found what made me feel fully alive: teaching English to adult speakers of other languages. This work was giving me what I needed, and by doing it I could give the world what it needed: myself fully alive.

Propelled by this energy that gave me deep joy, I made an appointment to visit SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont. I wanted to learn more about how to create classes that would engage students in an exciting learning environment. In August 2011, I got up at 4:00 AM and drove three hours to Brattleboro to meet someone in admissions and sit in on a class. As I sat in the parking lot, I was filled with terror. I was afraid they would tell me I was too old. I sat in the car with this dialogue going through my head:

“Go home! This is too scary. This is not for you!”

“Well, why did you come here?” I asked myself.

I knew the answer: to honor this energy that I feel in teaching.

So, I said to that voice of terror:

“Then shut up! I am going to get out of the car, go in and see what the energy has to say.”

So, I did. From the moment I walked into the big old white administrative building, the energy was euphoric. It was a bodily-felt experience. I walked over to the auditorium to sit in on a class

taught by Ray Clark, and I could barely contain the energy. Joy, enthusiasm, and light filled every cell in my body and burst out through my pores.

I decided the energy was leading me to SIT for the MATESOL. I applied and was accepted. In November, an abrupt phone call told me the two-year summer MATESOL program was terminated. I was told I could do the nine-month program. No explanation, no apologies. I could not afford to do the nine-month program. I needed to keep working. I was grief-stricken.

I had inherited enough money to pay for my SIT MATESOL program without taking out any loans. I decided to use that money to pay off the last of my children's college loans and find other ways to nourish my teaching energy. I enrolled in a two-year interfaith chaplaincy program. I thought a study of a variety of spiritual traditions might help me understand this phenomenon of the teaching energy. A year later, I learned that SIT was offering the MATESOL program in a new format for people who would continue their regular teaching jobs. Initially I thought, I cannot do it. I've spent the money. I'm too old. Sitting with those thoughts, I realized I earned just enough money to pay for the program semester-by-semester. I also deepened my commitment to meet ageism by living my life fully until it was over.

I began the SIT lo-residency MATESOL program in June of 2013. I was nourished, and validated at SIT. It was in the initial classes that I first heard others talking about energy in teaching. Caleb Gattegno, who believed teaching is subordinated to learning, wrote about the energy that occurs during learning. In November of 1998 his wife, Shakti, gave a keynote address called "Caleb Gattegno's Science of Education: Ten Years After" to the International Conference of The Science of Education. In it she said he believed learning is the ability of human beings to act consciously and willfully to transform their potential into their existential reality (Gattegno, 1998). From his observation of children, Gattegno proposed that the teacher's job is to create the climate and offer activities that nourish the human capacity for self-

awareness, and allow human evolving through self-education (Gattegno, 1998).

In the summer of 2013, Hugh Birdsall, a student of Gattegno and a teacher of The Silent Way, which is based on Gattegno's philosophy, came to our SIT Approaches class. I was moved by his ideas, particularly about not praising students. Praise does not empower students.

An empowering classroom is one where teachers support students to engage fully in the learning process. The focus is not on the product such as tests. It is the affirmation and recognition of the student's experience that comes when a student feels the energy that comes with understanding.

Birdsall put into words what I was experiencing in the classroom. I understood that I am a teacher because I love the process of learning and I love immersing myself deeply into that energy of learning that ignites my passion. The process is its own reward and praise is only a distraction. Gattegno put it this way:

This is not the willful learning of teaching, but the egoless following of learning. Further, this learning is not a gerund; this learning is a participle. It is not something that results in a static product; it is a dynamic process. Learning in this sense means being open to what comes, relating to it and becoming different in its presence (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 232).

I am exploring the nature of this dynamic energy. For me, the engagement with the process creates a sense of well-being and vitality. I believe it is something that is available to anyone: there are ways to access it, take care of it, and work with it. Eastern meditative practices and martial arts are a rich resource of insight. I draw from these traditions in my personal life, and they have influenced the quality of my teaching. I am a long time practitioner of mindfulness practices that train me to observe and understand ways that the mind works. I have

also studied physical modalities, including yoga and Feldenkrais, which help to move energy in the body.

I began this chapter with the quote from Teilhard de Chardin. I know the word God has different meanings for different people. For me, it is being in the presence of that energy that is greater than I am, connects me with others, and makes me feel, as Howard Thurman put it, fully alive.

Chapter Two: New Understanding of the Mind and Body

Skill: Proprioceptive Writing/ Deep Listening

We teach who we are. Teaching like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror, and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self knowledge – and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject (Palmer, 2007a, p.2-3).

The first experience I want to look at is the birth of my fourth child and first daughter, Caitlin. She was born during the summer Olympics in 1984, five days before Joan Benoit won the first women's Olympic Marathon. As I held Caitlin, nursed her and looked at her perfectly embodied little being, I became aware that on some deep level I was not happy and did not know why. I knew I had to find the root of this discontentment. I did not want my daughter to have an unhappy mother. About a year later, I signed up for a Proprioceptive Writing course at the University of Southern Maine. Proprioception is a part of the nervous system and is like a sixth sense. It is what makes it possible for us to understand where we are physically located at any one point in time. We know this understanding both in our bodies and in our mind. It is what we need to have a sense of ourselves as embodied, for the body to know itself. When I look at my hand, I can feel it and know that it belongs to me. We feel our bodies as our own property. Without this sense, we do not know who we are, we do not recognize this hand as belonging to

us. Proprioceptive Writing is using the term “*metaphorically, comparing the mind’s capacity to know itself to the body’s*” (Metcalf & Simon, 2002, p.11).

This course, conceived and taught by Linda Metcalf, was a form of meditative writing with strong guidelines. The first was to write on unlined paper and only on one side of the paper. The second was to write with a lighted candle near the paper. The third was to listen to Baroque music while writing: I remember Linda saying Baroque music is helpful for focusing. Proprioceptive Writing was a practice of deep listening, to hear one’s own mind.

In one of the first classes, Metcalf said, “Most of what we hear in our minds is not our own thinking. It is what we have picked up from the culture and the world around us. This practice will help us to hear our own thinking.” It had never occurred to me that there was a difference between the thoughts in my head and my own true mind. We were encouraged to write everything and not to censor what we wrote. We learned to listen for an energy around a word. For me, this energy was a bodily-felt experience akin to interest, curiosity, fear or aversion. If a word had energy, we asked the Proprioceptive Question: “What do I mean by...” and wrote down on the paper whatever came up. There was no such thing as “good” or “bad” writing. After we wrote, we read our papers out loud. Reading with witnesses allowed the writer to hear themselves in a deeper way. Hearing oneself speak what one had just written was frequently unexpected and revealing. The listeners could respond by reflecting on what the writing had brought up in them. While there was no feedback on the writing itself, the listeners could respond on what came up in them.

I was like a sponge. I soaked up everything the course had to offer. I was hearing myself in a totally different way. I heard the unhappiness, I heard the fear of feeling it. I learned to recognize compelling energy around words or stories in me. I learned not to discount them even if I couldn’t understand them. One particular “write,” as they were called, continued to reduce

me to tears whenever I read it before a witness. I began to realize that my body knew things my mind was not conscious of. Physical sensations like tears, shaking, change of temperature or change of energy, became a beacon leading the way to insight. In that particular write, I said I was a purple petunia, but I was told to be a snapdragon because that is what people wanted. I had agreed to go along with being the snapdragon. I was beginning to understand the source of this enormous grief; in my effort to fit in, I had denied the essence of my soul.

While I was taking the Proprioceptive Writing course my hair began to fall out. I was carrying my daughter around in a backpack and she loved to pull on my hair and huge tufts of it would come out in her hands. I had all kinds of medical tests, but no one could find a cause for the hair loss other than what was loosely called “pregnancy trauma.” I knew my body was saying something. It was a foreign language, and Proprioceptive Writing became a way to translate the language of my body and communicate it to my mind’s understanding. Recently I have been listening to Reginald Ray, PhD, reading his book *Mahamudra for the Modern World: An Unprecedented Training Course in the Pinnacle Teachings of Tibetan Buddhism*. Ray says that the body experiences life directly, but the mind filters it into a virtual reality (Ray, 2012). I was learning to distinguish between the created reality of the mind and the direct experience of my body. It is still a practice to respect the language of my body, but that is a topic for another paper.

While I was taking the Proprioceptive Writing Course, my second son was looking at colleges. We went to Boston so he could visit his brother at Harvard. While they were together, I decided to go to the Boston Museum of Fine Art. I was standing on a staircase looking at Monet’s “*Poppy Field in a Hollow near Giverny*.” Out of nowhere, a thought flashed through my mind, “Why can’t I do that?” I have inserted a print of the painting here.



It had never occurred to me to be an artist. But I could tell from my Proprioceptive Writing experience that this thought had a compelling energy. I practically ran to the bookstore, and with all the money I had, I bought every book I could on women artists.

As I drove back to Maine, I remembered a *Reader's Digest* article about a fine little art school in Portland, Maine where I lived. When I got home, I called my college roommate, who is an artist, and I asked her if it was possible to learn to be an artist. She said she thought so. Terror ran through every cell in my body. At the same time, this energy from a totally non-rational place kept me on the path that led me to become a student at Maine College of Art (MECA).

What do I notice in this experience? In many ways, this is about deep listening with openness: listening to the body and learning to recognize that it has a language and intelligence

that I had ignored. I was learning to understand myself from a new and different perspective. There was something startling about looking at my daughter and realizing the similarities of our bodies. I had never had anything like this with my three sons. I thought they were miraculous and amazing in their tiny bodies when we first met and in the way they grew and changed before my eyes. I never felt different from them or similar to them, that just was not in my consciousness. It was the awareness of the shared female body that awakened my awareness to totally unimagined worlds. The other body aspect is the unexplained loss of my hair. After I was accepted to MECA, my hair suddenly began to grow back.

As I examine this experience along with others that I will mention later in the paper, I am tracking elements that are common to all of them. One element is that my body, in fact any body, contains an energy which has an intelligence that we can learn from. Another element is a kind of deep listening that the Proprioceptive Writing practice trained me to work with.

The follow are suggested guidelines that I have organized from my experience for practicing Proprioceptive Writing. They are intended to help a reader explore this practice. Proprioceptive Writing can be studied in depth in the book, *Writing the Mind Alive* (Metcalf & Simon, 2002).

1. Pick a time and a place where you will not be interrupted for 25 minutes.
2. Have a lighted candle, some unlined sheets of white paper and a device on which you can listen to Baroque music such as Pachelbel's "Canon in D" or Yo-Yo Ma's "Simply Baroque."
3. Set a timer for 25 minutes, begin to write and keep your pen moving on the paper. Try to get down everything that goes through your mind. If there is nothing to say, that's what you write. Put it all down. You are listening to yourself with no censorship.

4. Ask the Proprioceptive Question, “What do I mean by...” when a word or memory catches your attention. This is a practice of listening without judgment, letting whatever is in your mind come out on the paper with no censor.
5. When the timer goes off, finish the thought you are working with. Then you can read it out loud to yourself to hear yourself.

For more information about Proprioceptive Writing courses, go to the Proprioceptive Writing

Center’s website: http://radix00.com/PWriting_Main/

<https://www.facebook.com/ProprioceptiveWritingCenter>

Chapter Three: Art School

Skills: More Insights into the Mind

Understanding Projections and Retrieval of Projections

I ran out of my first drawing class because I was afraid I would be seen as a fraud. I had no skill or experience at rendering what I saw. I was simply following this energy that seemed to call me. In a Modern Art History class I felt as if I had gone to a party where I knew no one, but I was totally at home. I couldn't draw, so I took every drawing class that was offered.

A teaching method in art school is "The Crit." Everyone puts work out in the studio, and the professor illustrates teaching points using the students' work. In one Crit, the professor kept coming back to my drawing. He was using it to show what was wrong and how it didn't work in relation to other drawings that were done by my classmates. Finally, he said, "Whose is this, anyway?"

I raised my hand. Something happened in that moment, and I was able to see that the work was separate from my self, my identity. Maybe it was because I knew I was not skilled at rendering what I saw, I did not think of myself as an artist. I had really poured myself into that work, but from that Crit on, I was able to separate who I was from what I did. For five years, immersed in the creative process and Crits, I learned again and again that I am not what I do. What I did mattered, and I wanted to do the best I could, but I got it: what I did as an artist was different from who I was as a person. I still did not know who I was, but I was freed from the terror of seeing my art as indistinguishable from my self. Something that had taken a lot of energy, that had driven me out of my first drawing class, no longer had power over me.

I remember one art school professor talking about how we don't see what is in front of us. We see what is in our minds. We project that onto the world outside. We have filters

through which we see the world. This is a projection. It is what Reginald Ray talks about as the virtual reality of the mind and what Rick Hanson in *Buddha's Brain*, refers to as our survival brain. I became intrigued by the idea of seeing. I had thought that what I saw was what was really there in front of me. In our self-portrait assignment, I saw that I was not drawing my face. I was drawing the idea of my face that came through my hands. When the professor talked about shades of light and dark, I did not understand initially what he was saying. A little while after that class I suddenly began to see everyone and everything in shades of light and dark. I returned to my self portrait, and it was as if the image emerged from the page. Combining this with my drawing Crit experience, I started considering that I was not who I thought I was.

Through countless experiences with the creative process, I began exploring who I really am. I would have an idea of what I was going to do to for an assignment. As soon as I became engaged in the creative experience, I became aware of possibilities I had never thought of. I would let my original idea go, saying, "I can come back to you later. What is occurring to me now is really interesting." I would create work with a loyalty to process rather than product. Something would result I never could have thought of on my own. Frequently I did not understand the work's meaning until we had a group Crit. Through listening to what other people said they saw in my work, I began to understand the meaning of what I had created.

By this time I was in my major which was sculpture. This questioning of my assumed identity was a significant part of my MECA experience. I still could not name who or what I was, but it was obvious to me that I was thriving in the creative atmosphere. I was feeling enormous energy in my work and my body responded by growing hair on my head and losing 140 pounds. While I might not identify myself as a sculptor, I was sculpturing in my life.

During my years in art school I went on a retreat called Women's Way. It was led by Alexandra Merrill, Wendy Wheeler and Joyce Weir. The retreat focused on recognizing and

retrieving projections. I began to understand what my drawing professor had talked about when he said we don't see what is out there. We see what is in our mind. During the retreat, we learned a language called "Percept Language" that Joyce and her husband, John had developed as a tool for retrieving projections.

Percept language is the language of perception, the language of "inside of me".

In contrast to concept (everyday) language which is judgmental, circuitous, circumspect, distancing, oblique, and often confusing, percept language is non-judgmental, experiential, reportorial, direct, and self-disclosing,

(J. Weir, workshop handout January, 1988).

The image that helps me understand how a projection works is to think of a movie projector as if it were in the psyche and it projects a movie on the "screen" of someone or something outside of me. This is another facet of Reginald Ray's virtual reality in our mind. I project outside of myself the material that I do not want to acknowledge as being a part of my own psyche. I believe this happens because at some time in our lives we were not ready to integrate this material into our sense of ourselves. I am compelled to understand reality as it is and not as I wish it were. I have a deep need for truth. I see this search for truth as intimately connected to the quality and quantity of energy in my life.

When I am projecting something on to someone (or vice versa), it is my experience that there is usually an energy or emotion that is calling for my attention. This is an invitation that says to me, "Pay attention, sweetie pie. There is some rich material here." It's an invitation to grow in awareness. It often appears in the form of dislike of someone, discomfort with someone, jealousy or admiration. At the time I learned this practice, there was a person in my life who was very judgmental. Every time he would make a judgment, I would get angry and

defensive. This is how I used the Percept Language as a projection retrieval process with him. First I noticed the strong emotion, which had a lot of energy around it. Second I named what I saw in the other person. Third, I let it all come out in my head and in writing. I would never speak it out loud to the other at this point, as I let myself say things that could be hurtful and that I would never say out loud like: saying that the other is mean, judgmental and whatever else I think. This is all about the other, what I think the other is. I do all this thinking and writing in what Joyce Weir calls the concept language. .

In Concept Language I speak as though events, feelings, dreams and thoughts are all visited on me while in the Percept Language, I take responsibility for me. One way to make sure I am being responsible is to use the form “ I have me...” There is you out there and there is the you-in-me—in here(in my mind)---my version of you (J. Weir, workshop handout, January,1988).

The next step is like turning my phone around and taking a photograph of myself: a “selfie.” I then name what I see in the other person as a part of me. In this case of the judgmental person in my life, I said to myself, “I have (the name of the other person) be the judgmental part of me.” When I turned the camera on me and shed light on a part of me that was real and suppressed, there was an energetic charge or a recognition. The experience of recognizing a projection that I have put on someone else is something like watching an old polaroid picture develop. The degree of energy in the anger was a clue to me that this judgmental quality was a part in myself that I was not yet willing or able to take responsibility for. I did not think of myself as judgmental. I thought of myself as pretty accepting of whatever was in front of me and was not easily bothered. So, I spent some time just sitting with the judgmental part of me.

How could this be in me? What part of me is judgmental that I need to be responsible for? I became aware of a strong voice in me that said, “Who do you think you are?” This was my own judge who would pounce on any creative idea, thought or venture. I realized it had been operating in me all along, but I was unaware of its presence. When I retrieve that projection, it’s as if I hold the fully developed photograph in front of me and recognize it as me. When I was able to look that judgmental part of me in the face, be responsible for it, the energy of anger toward the other person never appeared again in the presence of his judgments.

I think of projection retrieval as like moving from throwing money at other people to investing money in the quality of my own life. The percept language recognizes the person that angers, frightens or elicits a strong energy as a part of me. This is a part I can become aware of and be responsible for. This practice is an essential tool for conserving and renewing my energy. It is a simple practice but not an easy one. In this paper, I describe both the practice of projection retrieval and taking responsibility for one’s own life as personal inner work. It can also be done with the person on whom you are projecting, providing both are familiar with the practice and agree to do the work. The fruits are rich and wonderful. And like a fruit tree, it can take time to cultivate and nourish for understanding to ripen in consciousness.

In the classroom, teachers can use this practice to change the energy with a difficult student, one who “pushes your buttons.” It is important to note that this is a practice of private reflection, not one done with the student. In my own classroom, I had a student who was loud, disruptive and drew attention towards herself and away from the learning experience. While I usually love all my students, I felt dread at the thought of seeing her. Using the Percept Language I worked with the “loud, disruptive, attention seeking part of me.” I took each adjective and had her be the loud part of me, the disruptive part of me, the attention seeking part of me. After a few sessions of working with the projections through the Percept Language and

the Proprioceptive Writing, I saw that these were parts of myself that I was not comfortable with. They needed my care and attention. In the private safety of a few Proprioceptive Writing practice writes, I became aware of loud, needy and disruptive parts of myself that I was not comfortable with.

I began to sit with my discomfort and these parts of myself to see if I could become comfortable with them and eventually, I was able to recognize, understand and accept the loud, disruptive, needy parts of me. (In Chapter Six, and in some of the practices in Appendices B and C, I describe practices for being with the uncomfortable parts of ourselves.)

The student was a difficult challenge made more difficult because of my own inner suppressions. Once I was able to see what was mine to be responsible for and work with in me and separate it from the student outside in the classroom, I was able to sit comfortably with the student and give her the clear, present, attention that she needed. This practice does not always give clarity and understanding, but it can shift the dynamic in the classroom. Energy that was tied up in being annoyed or trying to suppress feelings, can become available to give clear attention and support to a troubled student.

As a practice for teachers, the projection retrieval skill, using the Percept Language can be helpful in dealing with students with whom you have difficulty. It is also a great tool for teachers to reclaim their energy. It does takes practice and a willingness to recognize and be responsible for the entirety of who we are in the classroom. Here are some of the ways I have used to develop the skill.

1. I combine the Proprioceptive Writing practice with the Percept Language to recognize and be responsible for a projection as a part of myself. I write down everything that bothers me about the other person. It is important here to write whatever I am feeling

and thinking even if it is judgmental and negative. I write in the concept language, the language of every day English.

2. The form of the percept language is to write, "I have the _____(quality that I see in the other person) be the _____(name the same quality) part of me," Using the example of a student who is loud and whiny, it can go like this:

I have the you-in-me (my idea of you out there that I have in my mind about you) be the you-in-me part of me. I have the loud you be the loud part of me.

3. Then I take each quality that I have written about the other and do one quality at a time. I write: "I have (name that person) be the whiny part of me." I listen to see if a feeling, thought, or other experience comes up in me. Often there is an unmet need* hidden in the projection. I feel an energetic shift when I identify what the part of me is that I have projected on to another. I don't necessarily like or feel comfortable with that part of me. However, because the process has given me a greater awareness of what I have been suppressing, I am better able to work with the student in a clearer and more open way. I can even feel gratitude toward the student for helping me own a suppressed part of myself. I don't tell this to the student! This work deals with unconscious material that we are trying to make conscious so that we have more energy for joy and learning in the classroom and in our own lives.

*For a helpful description of needs see:

Marshall Rosenberg's *Nonviolent Communication* (2003).

Chapter Four: Leaving Art School

Grief, Disconnection, Agony of Body and Mind,

Skill: Yoga and Mindfulness

I was the student graduation speaker at MECA. I had shaved my head for the commencement as an homage to my hair that fell out before I went to art school and then grew back when I entered art school. I thought that my soul or essential self spoke to me through my hair loss and I wanted to respond, saying, “I will listen and follow.” I believed that as artists we were giving voice to the soul through our work. Commencement seemed a fitting time and place for me to take a stand for what I believed. I saw the hair loss as a language from my body and I was attempting to listen to, learn from, and respond in that language. But I was unable to translate my experience to the language of the culture. My family was very angry with me for shaving my head. I had two sons in college, a twelve year old son and a six year old daughter at home. This was not culturally acceptable behavior for a 48-year-old woman!

After graduation, I felt overwhelming grief. I could not figure out how to be a mother and an artist. When I worked in my studio, I lost track of time and felt like I was coming out from the underworld. As I stuffed my grief with food, regaining the weight I had lost in art school my energy slumped and I felt stuck. It took all I had to get out of bed in the morning and be available to my children.

In desperation and hoping I could renew my energy, I went to a month-long Holistic Lifestyle Teacher Training at a yoga center in western Massachusetts. While I was there, I saw a notice for a training to become a yoga teacher. I felt a deep fear and recognized it as similar to the fear I had had about going to art school. I knew this meant I had to follow it. I thought, “Well this is about the body. There are a lot of people in the world who look more like me than

the pictures of yoga teachers.” I was going to become a fat, stiff, yoga teacher in a world of slim, beautiful, flexible, yoga teachers. In this time of disconnection from the creative support of art school and personal grief and confusion, I learned two more skills that, as I look back on them, were also significant tools in conserving and managing energy.

I took the yoga teacher training. Because of my size, I realized I could not do yoga “the right way”, so I would close my eyes and listen to my body, to what felt right in my body. This deep attention to what I felt in my body allowed me to feel energy, which the yogis called prana, move in my muscles. That made me feel good: open and more alive than I had felt since art school. Something was becoming unstuck. I became aware of the importance of gentle, attentive movement and breath as a way to manage energy. In order to make myself keep doing yoga, I began to teach classes that I called Yoga for Ordinary People and Everyday Life. I believed that as an art student it was my body that told me what to make, not my mind. I realized that in art school no attention had been given to caring for our bodies or even valuing them as a source for our creativity. So I offered my first classes at MECA.

I saw my weight gain as a response to the stress in my life, an attempt to cope with grief and as a holding on of energy perhaps out of fear or a need for protection. I knew I was running away from or hiding something, but I didn’t know what. Because I didn’t know why I was hurting myself, and I seemed unable to stop it, I decided to find a way to be with it as it was. I began to study meditation with a Zen master. I did a series of trainings in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) which I taught along with yoga. With yoga, I saw how movement of any kind, with awareness of the sensations of the movement, was a great tool for managing energy. Because I was fat and stiff I, could make my life miserable comparing myself to others or put my attention inward and notice what was going on in my body. I chose the latter. My body, in its socially undesirable form, was again teaching me of the power of turning in and

being with my own experience. MBSR combines body and mind with practices that include breathing and movement. Stress uses a lot of energy with the activity of a worried mind and the release of chemicals in response to the flight, fight and freeze triggers. When the mind is worried, it is not connected to the body. The body is working very hard to help by releasing chemicals that are designed to be discharged when the body goes into quick action in an emergency: to lift the car off the child or run from the charging tiger. Without a strong action to release the stress hormones, the mind keeps up the worry, and the body does not get to discharge the chemicals through action. Much energy is used in all forms of mental worry that has no real benefit and often does long term harm.

With the practice of mindfulness, which means to pay attention to what is actually happening right now without judgment and as if your life really mattered, the most immediate tool is breath. Because the breath is regulated by the nervous system and is both voluntary and involuntary, it is an easily accessible tool to transform the negative impact of stress. The transformation happens through the process of bringing one's mind to notice the sensations of the breath. This connects the body and the mind and activates the part of the nervous system that has to do with relaxation and digestion. The traditional recommendation is to sit comfortably and simply notice your breath coming in and going out. Sounds simple, but the mind, in its eagerness to help and its desire to always find something new and interesting, will go off wandering all over the place. Knowing that this is the nature of our minds, we just keep bringing our awareness to the mind and bring it back to the breath with kindness and gentleness. It can help to count the breaths, or to say, "I am breathing in, I am breathing out." Bringing the mind back is the actual practice of mindfulness and each time we bring the mind back to notice the breath, the neurology that allows us to be present to what is happening right now is strengthened. It takes less energy to be present to what is than it does to deny, suppress, avoid or wish things

were different. Again a simple practice that is not necessarily easy, but can yield great benefits in energy conservation and renewal.

For many of us, to sit still and watch the breath can be very frustrating. Combining gentle movement with breath and attention is also a form of mindfulness. By moving, breathing and noticing the sensations in the body as it moves, it is easier for the mind to focus and to be mindful of what is actually happening in the moment. There is no need to “get it right”. Of course the mind will run all over the place, even in moving mindfulness, and we just bring it back to what is happening in the present moment. Classical yoga movements can be very helpful for mindful movement. You can also do whatever you are doing in a mindful way: opening a door, cutting an apple, taking out the trash. Stop, take a breath and feel the breath moving in and out and then move the body in whatever way feels right at the moment, and, as best you can, notice as much as possible about the movement and the sensations you feel in the body. Doing classic yoga postures, or any stretching, releases a lot of energy that has been used to hold tension in the body. Mindfulness of moving, breathing and noticing is a simple, free and highly effective way to increase the amount of available energy in a person’s life.

Chapter Five: Language As a Form of Violence

Skill: Nonviolent Communication

An incipient bilingual: one who is willing to be in the presence of another language or culture that you really don't understand but you are willing to try

(Alvino Fantini, from an address at the SIT 50th anniversary celebration ,
Brattleboro, Vermont 8/9/14).

When my daughter was in the second grade she was learning to write and spell. I volunteered in her classroom and I noticed that she could spell perfectly when asked to for a test. One night I had gone to see the movie *Malcolm X*. with my 14 year old and 24 year old sons. After the movie, my sons and I had a wonderful conversation. We talked about how, in prison, Malcolm studied and at one point realized that negro came from the Greek word *necro* meaning dead. He saw how the language had a power to diminish and invalidate his experience, to name him as *dead*. We talked about the power of language to shape a consciousness and sense of self and the illuminating impact of recognizing that. When we got home there was a note for us from my daughter written in her “home” spelling. My older son was very upset that I was not correcting what he saw as her “bad” spelling. I said that she can spell perfectly well when she has to in school, but she is holding on to her own spelling because on some level she knows the language of the culture does not honor and respect her language as a female who is still deeply connected to something mystical and sacred. Their father was also in the room, and my explanation was ridiculed by the two adult men. I began to look at the language I had taken for granted. A short time later we listened to the first President Bush say we were going to invade Iraq, and he ended his speech asking God to give **His** blessings to the soldiers. My older son

asked me what I thought, and I said the first thing that came to my mind. “I wonder about a country that refers to God as he.” My comment ignited such outrage that I never got a chance to go any further on my wonderings, out loud that is.

I had great difficulty communicating in the family. Too many conversations became arguments, and winning an argument was not my interest. My energy felt depressed and blocked. My mind could not figure out what was going on but my body was suffering. I noticed I would eat wildly in response to my pain and frustration. In the way I would eat, I knew I was doing violence to myself. I wondered if I were mirroring a violence that was actually happening, and I couldn't recognize it because it was not physical.

Around this time I heard about Non-violent Communication. Non-violent Communication (NVC) was developed by American psychologist Marshall Rosenberg. It was advertised as a tool to help people exchange the information necessary to resolve conflicts and differences peacefully. It is based on the role of language and our use of words to either affirm or deny life. It is rooted in a belief that we are all innately compassionate, but we learn a language that does not cultivate this quality. NVC is sometimes referred to as compassionate communication because it is designed specifically to develop what Rosenberg saw as our innate compassion. I did a weekend workshop with Marshall Rosenberg. I was fascinated by his belief that our language is a language of violence and power, of making something better than or more than something else. It was the language I had learned, a language that prizes judgment, accumulation of knowledge, evaluation, right and wrong, agreeing and disagreeing. I had married that language. On the weekend introduction to NVC I saw that not only was the language I had married not my language, but also it was seriously impacting my energy. My family was not receptive to practicing this new language. Change is threatening and I needed time to work with this new language. NVC is another tool that I have found very useful in

conserving and renewing my energy. Recently, I used the guidelines of NVC to retrieve a lot of energy I had given to a person with whom I was angry. I was able to understand my need for respect and my own lack of self-respect through using the tools of NVC. Using Proprioceptive Writing and the Percept Language, I could see how deeply I cared about the work I do as a teacher, I could also see the ways in which I was uncaring to the deeply caring part of me. (See Appendix B, week three, for more detail on how I used NVC.)

There are four basic components of NVC or Compassionate Communication, as it is sometimes called. The following material about NVC is paraphrased from

www.cnvc.org/sites/cnvc.org/files/NVCInstructionGuide_Jiva_.pdf

Four Components

Observation: Observation without evaluation consists of noticing concrete things and actions around us. We learn to distinguish between *judgment* and *what we sense in the present moment*, and to simply observe what is there.

Feeling: When we notice things around us, we inevitably experience varying emotions and physical sensations in each particular moment. Here, distinguishing feelings from thoughts is an essential step to the NVC process.

Needs: All individuals have needs and values that sustain and enrich their lives. When those needs are met, we experience comfortable feelings, like happiness or peacefulness, and when they are not, we experience uncomfortable feelings, like frustration. Understanding that we, as well as those around us, have these needs is perhaps the most important step in learning to practice NVC and to live empathically.

Request: To make clear and present requests is crucial to NVC's transformative mission. When we learn to request concrete actions that can be carried out in the present moment, we begin to find ways to cooperatively and creatively ensure that everyone's needs are met.

Two Essential Attitudes

Empathy: Receiving from the heart creates a means to connect with others and share experiences in a truly life enriching way. Empathy goes beyond compassion, allowing us to put ourselves into another's shoes to sense the same feelings and understand the same needs; in essence, being open and available to what is alive in others. It also gives us the means to remain present to and aware of our own needs and the needs of others even in extreme situations that are often difficult to handle.

Honesty: Giving from the heart has its root in honesty. Honesty begins with truly understanding ourselves and our own needs, and being in tune with what is alive in us in the present moment. When we learn to give ourselves empathy, we can start to break down the barriers to communication that keep us from connecting with others.

To learn more about NVC, the full site referenced above and any of Marshall Rosenberg's books are very helpful.

Chapter Six: Welcoming the Unwelcome Parts of Ourselves

“There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique, and if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium; and be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is, nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open. You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work. You have to keep open and aware directly to the urges that motivate you. Keep the channel open.

Martha Graham

(As quoted in de Mille, 1991, p. 264.)

For me, this quote embodies Gattegno’s thoughts on learning (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 232) referred to on page 13 in this paper. How do we keep open what Martha Graham describes as the channel? In this chapter I look at how the way we relate to the most troublesome parts of ourselves affects the openness of the channel.

My experience with energy at SIT was different from any other experience I had had with energy. From that day in August 2011 to all the classes on the SIT campus, my energy was validated and respected in an academic environment. This provided me the safety to take risks and learn from them. One of the many gifts of the program was learning to respect what I call the teaching energy. Many opportunities were provided that allowed me to experience my personal fears and resistances. First, there was Raging River, a team building exercise. Later, there was Sandanona, a conference at which we each had to give a 45-minute presentation.

How does one deal with parts one doesn't want running the show in public? Authenticity is compromised by denying or suppressing parts of the self. It takes a lot of energy to hold something down so that it won't come out and get us by surprise. I believe that doing inner personal work is as important to good teaching as methods and techniques. I decided to develop a workshop for my Sandanona presentation on welcoming the unwelcome parts of ourselves. I had learned to live in and love a very large body whose bigness I did not want to welcome. No matter how hard I tried, I had been unable to change it and lose weight. If I let myself believe the cultural messages about fat women, I was paralyzed and miserable. I had to find a way to engage in life as fully and honestly as I could with how I was.

My body had become a brilliant teacher. SIT provided the opportunity to stretch my boundaries and take this big risk to offer a workshop at an academic conference on what I had learned from this brilliant teacher. It was an opportunity to stand publicly with the belief I share so passionately with Parker Palmer: - *and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject* (Palmer, 2007a, p.3).

I feared and resisted the Sandanona presentation. I decided to give words to my thoughts and experiences of what it means to me to live the Martha Graham quote. First, I investigated the parts of us that we don't like. Second, I looked at how we relate to ourselves when we are uncomfortable. They are two parts of the same whole and if welcomed as gifts can reveal insight. As Tara Brach says in her foreword to *Living with Your Heart Wide Open* (Flowers and Stahl, 2011, p. vii):

The greatest truths are too often forgotten. This calls us back to one that is central to our happiness: If we cannot embrace our own frightened and vulnerable hearts, we cannot love our world.

The Sandanona experience convinced me of the importance of developing some practices for the inner work of self-care and reflection for teachers. This chapter presents some of the tools I have used and found helpful personally and the next chapter describes an experiment I did with teachers at my school.

There is a myth of three princes who, in order to inherit their father's kingdom have to go to an enchanted part of the forest and get a box for their father. The eldest two go off confidently, first one and then later, the other. When each in turn comes to the gate to the enchanted wood, they find an ugly old woman. She asks each prince for a cup of water and a kiss. Each prince in turn replies, "Go away, you ugly, old hag." Suddenly neither of them can see or find the entrance to the enchanted forest and wander fruitlessly. Finally, the third son comes along and meets the old woman. When she asks for water, he offers her water from his flask. When she asks for a kiss, his heart is filled with sadness for the ugly old woman, and he bends and kisses her gently on her forehead, and each cheek. When his lips touch hers, she turns into the most beautiful woman he has ever seen. She leads him into the enchanted forest to the box which they return to the father. The youngest son inherits the kingdom.

Welcoming the unwelcome parts of ourselves means to acknowledge their presence in us with as much kindness and acceptance as we can. We can find wisdom in these rejected parts if we can learn how to listen openly and with kindness. This is a gentle practice that takes time and patience.

I want to share how I began this practice in hopes that my story could be of service. I began by identifying something that was relatively easy to work with. I chose my body because it was always available, did not involve anyone else and was FAT. I looked at what I liked and could honestly appreciate. I could honestly appreciate my feet because they carried me around. That brought me to my legs and hips which gave me support. My eyes could see. I would give

myself a few minutes to just be with the part I wished were different. My fat belly. How could I love my fat belly? Sitting with my fat belly, I gradually could imagine one of my children growing in there as a home, I could imagine all the cells taking in nutrients and letting go of waste.

When I did yoga and noticed the positive changes in how my body felt, I could appreciate that change. I would practice slow movement, coordinating my breath to the movement in a way that made sense to me. I would continually bring my mind and my attention to the sensations in my body. I could feel my body change from stiffness and heaviness to flexible and a feeling of lightness and spaciousness. I could feel and appreciate how, when I paid attention without judgment, this movement in my body changed how I felt and how my mind worked. Gradually I found things about my body I could honestly love.

This was not an easy practice. It was essential that I be honest. This was not a mind down process. It had to come up to my mind and its understanding from my heart and body.

Other difficult parts always seem to be popping up. For example, what do I think about myself when I have what appears to be a terrible class? It helps to notice the language I use. If it is unkind, I look for a way to rephrase it. For example, I might hear the voice that says, "You are a terrible teacher!" When I catch that voice, I make myself stop and notice what I feel in my body and where I feel it. The words *terrible teacher* are not true. These words are a concept about the experience which is removed from the qualities of the immediate experience. They prevent me from knowing the truth of the actual experience. They prevent me, or save me, from the full force of the feelings of the moment. The truth of the moment is in the sensations in the body. A knot in my stomach or heat in my cheeks is a fact. From there I might be able to move to a feeling that has no name, but just feels awful in the pit of my stomach. The next step is to be like a mother who puts her arms around a heartbroken child who struck out

every time at bat. Very often, if held with kindness, the feeling often moves through like a summer shower. Any difficult or embarrassing moment held in compassion, like kissing the ugly old woman, keeps the channel open.

Some parts are harder and more tenacious. They require a practice of patience and trust. When I was 67, I applied for a contract job at PAE. Up to that time I had been an hourly teacher. I did not get the job because of my age. The person who got the job was 40. I later saw an email saying that as people were retiring they were being replaced with younger staff members. I understood this reasoning on an intellectual level, but was deeply hurt on a visceral level. My bitterness, resentment, and irritation did not leave willingly. I was not hired because of something that had nothing to do with ability. I made a choice: I decided to use the experience as an opportunity to understand discrimination, be it race, religion, disability or other forms of rejection. I struggled with the power of the cultural messaging around age. In my psyche, I struggled with the ugliness of my reaction to rejection, ageism and my confusion about what to do in the face of ageism. Despite this I was still filled with energy and joy as I prepared for and taught my classes. The work of being with the unwelcome parts of me has become an important and freeing practice. Learning more about who I am is as important to me as learning new and better ways to teach the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

The inner work of meeting our shadow side is vital to the quality of energy in the classroom. As teachers, a big part of our world is the classroom. It gives us many opportunities to come into a right relationship with our vulnerabilities, fears and insecurities. It takes practice, patience and deep listening. As we do this work we open the door to the kind of classroom Marilyn Page describes.

The ultimate goal for you is to have a robust and sound rhythm in your class that will crackle and explode with positive student interaction, energy, and learning. The goal is for your class to have a heartbeat that is so healthy and alive that everyone is able to feel that dynamic beat. Students in your class will feel the energy, onlookers will feel it; anyone walking into your room will feel it. Just as you can't teach until everyone is listening, likewise, you can't teach until everyone can feel and is a part of the heartbeat (Page, 2008, p.107).

Ultimately, I believe that teachers work for peace in the world. For classrooms to have a healthy heartbeat we must have the courage to care for our own hearts first. As Robert F Kennedy said in his N.U.S.A.S. "Day of Affirmation Speech" on June 6, 1966 at the University of Cape Town, South Africa:

It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance

(<http://www.rfksafilm.org/html/speeches/unicape.php>)

Chapter Seven: An Investigation of Curiosity and Joy

“Many...educators, burn themselves out trying to give, give, and give some more, often forgetting that they also need to receive care from others and care for themselves.to care for oneself and to receive care from others...is what sustains educator’s passion, compassion, and ability to extend care to their students, colleagues, families, and friends” (Heineberg, Makransky, & Seigle, 2015, p.6).

In the first week of January 2015, I did a seven-day meditation retreat with Lama Willa Miller and Lama John Makransky at Wonderwell Mountain Refuge in New Hampshire. I went because Lama Willa, who studied in Tibet, incorporates body and movement into the meditation practices she teaches. I had found many Tibetan practices very accessible and particularly helpful in welcoming the unwelcome parts of myself. I wanted to learn more and to learn how I could teach practices to students and teachers. I was particularly interested in the idea that the body is an essential and necessary element in the training. In our culture the wisdom of the body has been ignored and even demeaned and we suffer for that. On that retreat I saw that my idea of welcoming the unwelcome parts of ourselves as a practice to conserve and renew energy is a central practice of the Dzogchen or Natural Dharma Fellowship. When I told Lama John of my desire to develop my ideas around embodied learning and welcoming the unwelcome parts of ourselves, and that I wanted to translate my experience into practical tools to offer to teachers as ways to conserve and renew energy, he gave me the *Call to Care: Educator’s Professional Development Guide*. He is on the faculty and one of the primary contributors in the development of the manual.

In 2012, the Mind and Life Institute launched its Ethic, Education, and Human Development (EEHD) Initiative to advance the cause of promoting human flourishing around the globe. Inspired by His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s

call to design a curriculum and pedagogy in “secular ethics” we identified an opportunity to join the growing movement of educators, scientists and contemplatives engaged in this work....to promote new, interdisciplinary approaches for nurturing children’s ethical and prosocial development” (Heineberg, Makransky, & Seigle, 2015, p. 5).

This professional development is in the pilot stages. It is a year-long training for teachers to practice and fully integrate the experience of the skills of giving self-care and receiving care in their own lives before they begin to teach caring skills to students. With Lama John’s permission, I decided to see if I could use some aspects of the material to conduct an experiment with some teachers at my school. I asked a group of six deeply dedicated, very burdened, and highly stressed teachers if they would be interested in participating in an investigation with me for this IPP. My investigation question was: “What is the smallest amount of time a person can invest in a practice on a daily basis that will show a noticeable improvement in the quality and quantity of energy?” I asked people to commit to 15 minutes a week to learn and practice the skill for that week and 5 minutes a day to practice. The five daily minutes could be broken up into two 2.5 minute sessions, or even 1 minute five times throughout the day. At the request of the teachers, I made a podcast of each practice.

Teachers tend to be naturally caring people and skilled in giving care, but there is very little training in receiving care and giving self-care. The focus of the five sessions was on cultivating practices to receive care and give self-care. Each practice has a somatic component with movement or stretching along with breath to connect the mind and body. I have included the invitation email and the practices for each of the five weeks in Appendix A and B.

The first session is called “Letting Be” and begins with a little stretching and breathing and then focuses on the feeling of the breath and watching thoughts go by as if they were clouds in the sky. The skill is to connect the mind with the body through focusing on the breath and to begin to learn how to disengage from the thoughts and suggest the possibility of a mind as open and accepting as the sky. It also introduces the idea of noticing moments of connection. This prepares the ground for the idea that there is positive energy all around us. We are trained to, and our brain is wired to notice that which it perceives as negative or threatening. We can train ourselves to be more aware of everyday sources of energy and renewal through noticing the moments of positive connection.

The second week is called “The Caring Moment” practice. Here participants remember a moment of connection with someone when they felt seen, accepted or cared for. It can be a person they know or a stranger who looked at them seeing them fully. The caring moment can even come from an animal or a place in nature where connection has been felt. After a few moments, participants imagine this connection is happening right now and feel the feeling in their body and imagine every cell in the body filled with deeply caring energy. The purpose here is to develop a felt experience of caring connection that is always available to us. We can increase our energy and actually change our brain by focusing on experiences of receiving care.

The third week, “Receiving Care” deepens the focus on receiving care by building on the previous week’s experience of a moment of connection and imagining it as a shower of gentle caring energy pouring over the body and filling every cell with caring energy. It is often difficult for many caring people to receive care for any number of reasons, so in the full year-long Call to Care program for educators, Marshall Rosenberg’s Non-violent Communication is offered as a tool to help remove possible blocks to receiving care. Because I have found this to be such a useful tool in my personal energy conservation and renewal, I explained the core elements in a

separate handout for those who might have time to explore it. I explained the 4 essential elements and gave a handout that gave a specific example of how I had used NVC. I did not want to overload people with information, and since this was an experiment I decided to offer a minimal introduction to this process that is also known as Compassionate Communication. It turned out that it was a tool of great value for at least one of the teachers who had a particularly challenging “growth opportunity.” Because we were doing these practices to learn to receive care and to practice self-care, she was able to use the essential elements of Compassionate Communication in a way that transformed her part in a deeply painful family dynamic. She was able to practice self-care and communicate from a place of compassion.

The fourth week builds on the previous three weeks with body and breath movement, mindfulness of breath, mindfulness of body and introduces compassionate mindfulness of feelings. The practice is to just invite whatever feeling you are feeling to just be with you without trying to understand, remove, reject or judge it. This is a very challenging practice for most people. There is a deep fear of many feelings and a strong desire to suppress or get rid of them. The invitation is to experience the feelings, whatever they might be, with the kindness which we have been practicing toward ourselves. It is very similar to what I call Welcoming the Unwelcome parts of ourselves. The week after this practice, one of the teachers told how she had used it in a situation that brought up a lot of fear and anxiety for her. She remembered the practice and reported that she imagined the shower of caring energy pour down on her, filling every cell in her body with deep care and she held her fear and anxiety telling herself she was okay. Even though the feelings did not go away, they did not overwhelm her as they always had in the past.

The fifth week combines the full practice of what we have learned each week and introduces practicing compassionate mindfulness of thoughts. Participants are encouraged to notice

thoughts with an attitude of kindness and just let them pass through the mind like clouds in the sky.

Each week I encouraged teachers to remember to take what works for them and only for the amount of time they could afford. It might be enough to just stretch, notice your breath and remember how you felt and what we did when we were all together learning the practice. I emphasized that we were learning skills for caring. There seems to be a lot of guilt around “doing meditation”. Guilt consumes unnecessary energy, so I was looking for ways to approach this with the curiosity of a child to learn what works and leads to a feeling of success. Instead of calling it meditation or mindfulness, I worked with calling it strength training for the mind.

Teachers told me that it was very helpful in many ways. Some said just the sessions together reminded them to stretch and breathe during the day and reconnect to the experience of the 15 minutes with the other teachers. Teachers reported that they used the podcasts in the car when they drove to school and before they got out of the car would sit and listen to it before getting out of the car. One of the teachers told me that she and two others were feeling very stressed. So they went into a room, closed the door and listened to one of the podcasts. At the end of the fifth week session they asked if we could keep this up. Yes! Seven teachers and I met once of week for the third semester. At the end of the semester two of the teachers said they felt a definite change in the energy in the building because of what they were doing. I have included the practices we did the third semester in Appendix D.

From the feedback I received I realized that this is vital and much needed work. I have included some of the teacher’s written feedback in Appendix E. As a result of this IPP investigation I can see myself devoting the rest of my life to learning how to offer these tools to educators all over the world!

Conclusion

This Independent Professional Project began with my curiosity about why I experienced such a profound feeling of joy when I did the work around ESOL teaching. I thought I would do research on scientific studies of energy, the brain, the body and how our individual behavior can be a force for peace in the world. I believed I needed the support of published objective researchers to validate my experience. For the first two months of the project, I felt overwhelmed by the scope of my investigation and could not find a way to focus. This forced me into a more intense practice of many of the tools I describe in the previous chapters.

In late February, I had the thought that I could look at my life and the experiences I have had and what I have learned within the framework of the experiential learning cycle. I remembered the first time I heard the reference to the ELC. It was in 1989 when I went on the weeklong retreat called Women's Way where I learned the percept language. The whole retreat was based on the ELC with an experience and then a group processing of the experience. It was one of the most exciting learning experiences of my life to that point. I think ELC is a conduit for this vitality I wanted to investigate and understand.

I decided I would limit my IPP to a reflection on my own life experience as a valid source of research about how to bring the whole teacher into the classroom, access the authentic self and connect with the energy of joy in the classroom learning experience. This paper has distilled some of my key learnings and has presented me with a new learning cycle from which more learning and action are developing.

I have learned that the beginning of something is often full of chaos, uncertainty, lack of focus and direction and that I have the tools to ride out this period and discover a direction. I have learned that what I have done and what I do matters and to appreciate with new respect the

depth of my investment and the importance of my care. I care deeply about what I am doing as I prepare my classes and I need to allow time and space to respect and value that investment and all that it is to me. In so doing, I am better able to care authentically for my students and their learning experience. I meet and relate to them in the same way I meet and relate to myself; all of myself.

I chose to have several people read this paper as I was writing it. I felt very vulnerable because what I was writing was so personal. I was, and probably still am, under the influence of the idea that the subjective is less valuable than the objective. Gradually, just like the experience with the Crit at MECA, I became more skilled in taking the focus off my concern about what people thought of me and more skilled and excited about clarifying my thinking and my writing.

I have learned to trust my instincts and have heightened my sensitivity to bodily wisdom. For example, when I decided to do the investigation, Curiosity and Joy at PAE, I felt something like a physical reaching out in my body as I listened to teachers talking about their stress and concern. It was not an idea in my head at first. It was something in my center moving from me toward them.

I had been practicing with the tools in the Call to Care manual and thought they might be helpful for the teachers. That became the means by which I could experiment with a way to help others access energy for their work. Knowing that stress consumes a lot of energy, I decided to address self-care as a tool to help diminish the negative effects of stress.

As I used the Call to Care pilot program material I kept in touch with one of the writers of the program to get his permission for my adaptations. He and his co-writer were excited about what I was doing. I kept asking for ways to be trained to learn how to teach teachers as best I could. He and his writing partner invited me to participate in the year long Call to Care training at the Mind and Life Institute which begins with a five day intensive in late July 2015.

Doing the reflection and experiment for this paper made me realize that training in self-care is desperately needed for teachers and that significant benefits can be experienced with minimal regular investments of practice. I wrote a proposal to do a workshop offering self-care practices for teachers and was accepted to present at the November 2015 Northern New England TESOL convention.

The energy that drew me into ESOL teaching seems to be drawing me in a new direction. I have something I can offer that is helpful to other teachers and that comes from my lived experience. Teachers need skills to help conserve and renew their energy as much as they need to keep abreast of best practices. They need skills that are easily accessible and minimally time consuming. As I venture into the territory of teaching teachers, I will continue to nourish my own compelling desire to learn and grow. This IPP has given me the opportunity to stand straighter and taller in my own wisdom gained from experience. In claiming my voice I am joining all those who are working for joy and peace in the face of pain and despair. I am grateful to the IPP for pushing me to cast my pebble into pond.

Each time a (person) stand up for an idea, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, (that person) sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance (Kennedy, 1966).

Appendix A

Handouts for Curiosity and Joy at Portland Adult Education: An Investigation

1. Email sent out to teachers to experiment with Call to Care practices

Subject: Curiosity and Joy

March 7, 2015

Dear Friends,

Tonight many of you will be working in the kitchen to help nourish the bodies of those attending the International Women's Day Fashion Show that will surely nourish the souls and spirits of all who are there.

I will be home working on my thesis for my MATESOL. My rough title is "Connecting with the energy of joy in learning and how this contributes to peace in the world!!!" I am interested in practical ways that overworked, highly stressed and deeply caring people can connect with this energy on a conscious and regular basis to prevent burnout and increase clean energy and vitality.

Because I see you as deeply caring, most likely highly stressed and overworked people, I would like to invite you to participate in an investigation with me as part of my thesis.

The investigation question is:

What are useful practices that can be done for the least amount of time to have the biggest return on nourishing the energy of joy?

I believe that learning is increased in an environment of joy.

My proposal is to meet for no more than 15 minutes once a week for five weeks beginning next week to learn a new practice each week. You would need to be able to practice 5 minutes a day. (it can be done in two 2.5 minute sessions)

I know for me this has been transformative. I want to see how I can make it useful for others. Some of the practices I will be using come from *A Call to Care* which is a program in development through the Mind and Life Institute to nourish the heart of education through training in kindness.

I hope you are interested and that we can find a time when all of you can participate. I am available Monday and Wednesday any time from 11:30-4:00.

Have a wonderful time tonight!

Cheers,

Arline

Appendix B

Handouts for Curiosity and Joy at Portland Adult Education: An Investigation

These practices were adapted with permission from Heineberg & Makransky (2105)

Curiosity and Joy at Portland Adult Education: An Investigation

Week One Practice:

Cultivating Care Practices for Teachers 3/8/15

Cultivating Self Care as part of the Mind and Life *Call to Care* curriculum for educators. These are a few of the mind and body centered strategies that cultivate the capacity to:

1. become attuned to the wisdom of our bodies
2. manage stress and difficult emotions
3. hold thoughts and feelings in an accepting, and healing mode of awareness
4. promote cognitive flexibility and openness to experience
5. be able to recognize and take better care of our needs.

Ultimately these practices will have a profound effect on managing and renewing our personal energy and allow us to be more effective with our students and peers.

The Letting Be Practice

Begin by sitting in a relaxed and comfortable way. Slowly and with awareness, breathe in and lift your head as if the breath were extending your spine. On the exhale, let your right ear move

to the right shoulder as if you were breathing it there. Take a breath in and let it out as you soften into the stretch. Inhale your head back to center and exhale your left ear to the left shoulder.

Take a breath in and out and inhale your head back to center. Feel your feet on the floor and your buttocks making contact with the chair. Take three slow, deep cleansing breaths. Allow your attention to drop into the body feeling it as a whole with a sense of openness. Sense the body's groundedness – feeling yourself rooted and supported by your chair and the floor. If you notice any feelings of stiffness, tightness or holding on within the body, gently let those places of tension relax, allowing the body to settle in its own way. Deeply let be with the body as if you are becoming one with it.

When you are ready, tune into the feeling of your breath as it enters and leaves your body. Notice any tension in the breathing process, and let that relax. Let the breath settle into its own natural flow, as if you are becoming one with the breath, feeling it breathe you, and letting be into it.

When you are ready, in a similar way, bring your attention to any thoughts arising in your mind. Notice any grasping to the thinking process in the mind, any holding on to a pattern of thought, memory, to-do list. As best you can let that feeling of holding on relax deep within. Give the mind permission to be totally open like the sky and all patterns of thought and feeling just relax and unwind within a space of deep allowing and letting be, like the sky holding the clouds. Experience all thoughts, feelings and sensations within this compassionate space of deep acceptance – the natural kindness of letting all be.

Do the **Letting Be** practice every day for the smallest possible time that you can regularly do. Five minutes a day is great. 2 minutes in the morning and 2 minutes just before bed is also great. If 2 minutes a day is all you can do, and you can do it every day, GREAT! If you forget

to do it and at some point during the day remember, take a deep breath in and let it out and call that your practice. You remembered and you took a breath and you remember that we met for 15 minutes earlier in the week and you connected to that experience when you remembered. The moment of remembering and the observed and felt breath can be your practice: the smallest one you can do on a daily basis.

During the day every now and then just let the body, breath or mind just be for a few seconds. Take a tiny “Letting Be” break. After a few days, do you notice any effects on your day from taking these brief “letting be” breaks?

Each day before bed, jot down 2 or 3 simple moments of connection or care that you noticed during your day. These can be brief moments of connection: a smile or a kind gesture and also moments of deeper care, such as being listened to in a deep way, or being seen or acknowledged and valued.

Curiosity and Joy at Portland Adult Education: An Investigation

Week Two Practice:

Caring Moment Practice 3/15/15

Sit in a relaxed way and try to bring to mind a moment – just one simple moment – when you felt seen, accepted or cared for. This can be a moment in which someone dear to you, like a caring teacher or relative or child, or even a stranger, connected with you in a simple caring way. It might have been through a gentle smile, a kind gesture, a welcoming presence, or even a deep listening. We are not looking for a perfect person, nor do we want to pick someone we think we “should” pick. Just recall a simple moment of connection.

Imagine that moment is present now, not just a memory of the past, but as if it were happening right now. Notice what it feels like in your body to inhabit that experience. Imagine that person is connecting with you in your deep worth and potential and taking joy in being with you, is just wishing you well. Feel the happiness of experiencing this moment, just accepting this caring wish for you to whatever extent you can right now. Relax into this experience of connection and loving energy, letting it infuse every part of your body and mind.

When you are ready, allow the image to fade and let yourself simply let go into that feeling of care, acceptance and deep allowing. Take a moment to enjoy being at ease and complete. When you are ready get up and have a great day!

Two guidelines:

1. The purpose is not to get caught up in stories and abstract thoughts about the caring figures themselves. The purpose is to experience the capacity in us for caring connection that is always

available. Therefore it is most helpful to choose a relatively simple moment that makes you happy to recall.

2. Before you begin you can empower receiving care by exploring some somatic practices that help open the chest and often the heart, thereby facilitating a bodily sense of openness and allowance. If you have time, try these movements just before you do the *Caring Moment*.

Cat/Cow sitting comfortably in a chair with your feet on the floor and your spine reaching up, place your hands on your thighs. As you inhale, arch your back, spread your collarbones, lift your chin toward the ceiling and allow your belly to sink toward the floor. Take care not to drop your head too far back. As you exhale, round your back, roll back on your sit bones, and allow your chin to drop towards your chest. Follow the natural rhythm of your breath as you repeat this several times. Finally bring your hands to the back edge of your seat. Inhale as you lift your chest towards the ceiling. Take a few easy breaths imagining your heart open to receive loving care. Then relax back in your chair and notice how your body feels.

During the week: do the practice once a day. If you have difficulty recalling a moment of connection with a caring person, you might try recalling an experience of feeling deeply relaxed and at ease in a particular place in nature. Or you might try recalling a moment of connection with an animal.

Take short breaks during the day to touch in on the *Letting Be* or *Caring Moment*. I like to think of the mindful practice to be like filling my water bottle and during the day I take little sips of water.

Over time, do you notice any effects from these brief breaks in the day? Continue to jot down two or three simple moments of connection or care you notice during your day.

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Week Three Practice:

Receiving Care Practice 3/22/15

In the past two practices we have explored ways to help us relax and let be and to notice the care that is all around us. We can deepen this knowing by learning to notice more and more moments of simple care that are directed toward us or are between others. If you have time, before doing this week's practice try the movement sequence we practiced:* *Mountain, to Downward Dog to Warrior 1*. Exploring somatic practices can help ground and strengthen the body while also opening and softening our chest area can further support the **Receiving Care Practice**. Then sit in a relaxed way and allow your body to be at ease, letting go of any tension. Simply allow your body to be. Allow your breath to be natural, without trying to control or manipulate it in any way. Allow your mind to be at ease, like the sky totally open and accepting, as your thoughts just pass by like clouds in the sky, letting all be. Recall a moment of caring connection with someone and imagine that moment is present right now. Imagine that person is seeing you in your deep worth and potential beyond any limiting judgments, feeling joy in your presence, and wishing you well in the deepest sense. Feel the happiness of holding this person in mind, opening and accepting their wish for your well-being. Imagine their caring wish and loving energy as a shower of gentle healing energy that permeates your whole body and mind. Explore just opening and accepting it to whatever extent is possible right now. Accept this shower of loving energy into every part of your body...into every cell...letting each area of tension soften a little under its touch. After a little while, accept this gentle energy into every part of your mind. As best you can, allow yourself to feel every feeling of worry, tension, happiness...any underlying feelings of fear, frustration, longing, sadness or joy that may rise up in you. Let such

feelings come up and be permeated in this shower of loving energy. Let every thought and feeling, even as it arises, be permeated by this healing energy, like a puppy lying on a rug in the sun. Every part of you, every cell is loved in its very being.

When you are ready, allow the image or memory to fade, and let yourself simply let go into that feeling of care, acceptance, and deep allowing. Take a moment to enjoy just being at ease and complete, not seeing anything else at the moment. When you are ready, slowly stretch and move and get up and have a wonderful day.

* See Appendix C for description of the yoga postures we did in conjunction with this practice

Over the course of the week take a few minutes each day to practice **Letting Be**, the **Caring Moment**, or **Receiving Care** exercises. During the day find a way to take a break and reconnect with any part of these exercises, like taking a sip of water.

Note: This was a second handout given for those who might have time and interest to investigate the practice of compassionate communication

For many of us, receiving care can be challenging. A tool that has been very helpful can be found in Marshall Rosenberg's language of Nonviolent Communication. It is a language that helps develop skills to communicate from a place of basic compassion. I have included a description of the 4 basic principles and an example of how applying these principles to a situation in my life had a big impact on my ability to manage my energy in a life affirming way. You might find it interesting and helpful to look at opportunities to practice the non-violent communication skills in your daily life.

Marshall Rosenberg's Non-Violent or Compassionate Communication Skills

This is a communication and conflict resolution process that focuses on four essential elements for clear communication.

1. Observe without any evaluation what has triggered my feelings.
2. Identify the feeling that was triggered.
3. Identify the need(s) that underlie those feelings.
4. Make a request that clearly expresses my need.

For example Someone volunteered to help me in the classroom. At the last minute, without notifying me, the person did not show up. I had invested a lot of time in providing material for that person.

1. Observe without any evaluation what has triggered my feelings

- A. The person did not come as agreed.
- B. The person did not notify me.
- C. I had invested time and energy to email material for that person.
- D. There was no response to my email.

2. Identify the feeling that was triggered.

I was very angry. I was so angry I could not think clearly.

3. Identify the need(s) that underlie those feelings.

- A. appreciation
- B. respect
- C. valuing what I do

4. Make a request that clearly expresses your need.

I need to know at least an hour in advance if you can't come.

I need to know if you have gotten the material I sent you and if it is of any use to you.

In this case, I did not work this out with the other person. I decided that I did not want or need to invest my energy with him. I was able to clearly and cleanly work this out with the Volunteer Coordinator. I discovered other teachers had had similar experiences with this person. The intensity of my anger was a clue that this was a particularly powerful learning opportunity for me about something in me that needed to be embraced. I was grateful for the four steps to give me a framework on which to organize my fury and reap its hidden insights rather than wasting it on judging the other person. I realized that I need to have more respect for myself. There is a deep place in me from which what I am doing comes. I invest huge amounts of time and thought in class preparation. I saw how I just took that for granted. I need to practice the skills of self-care we have been working with in the first two practices of our investigation of curiosity and joy. It became clear to me that some of my awareness and care needs to be directed toward myself. From this particular experience, I learned I need to have a lot more specific clarity with volunteers.

Some Basic Feelings We All Have

Feelings when needs are fulfilled

Amazed	Fulfilled	Joyous	Stimulated
Comfortable	Glad	Moved	Surprised
Confident	Hopeful	Optimistic	Thankful
Eager	Inspired	Proud	Touched
Energetic	Intrigued	Relieved	Trustful

Feelings when needs are not fulfilled

Angry	Discouraged	Hopeless	Overwhelmed
Annoyed	Distressed	Impatient	Puzzled
Concerned	Embarrassed	Irritated	Reluctant
Confused	Frustrated	Lonely	Sad
Disappointed	Helpless	Nervous	Uncomfortable

Some Basic Needs We All Have

Autonomy

Choosing dreams/goals/values
 Choosing plans for fulfilling
 one's dreams, goals, value

Celebration

Celebrating the creation of life
 and dreams fulfilled
 Celebrating losses: loved ones
 Dreams, etc. (mourning)

Integrity

Authenticity Creativity
 Meaning Self-worth

Interdependence

Acceptance Appreciation
 Closeness Community
 Consideration
 Contribution to the enrichment
 Of life
 Emotional Safety Empathy

Physical Nurturance

Air Food
 Movement exercise
 Protection from life threatening
 forms of life: viruses, bacteria,
 insects, predatory animals
 Rest Sexual expression
 Shelter Touch Water

Play

Fun Laughter

Spiritual Communion

Beauty Harmony
 Inspiration Order Peace

Honesty (the empowering
 honesty that enables us to learn
 from our limitations)
 Love Reassurance
 Respect Support
 Trust Understanding

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Week Four Practice:

Compassionate Mindfulness of Breath, Body and Feelings 3/30/15

Compassionate Mindfulness of Breath

Begin by taking three slow deep cleansing breaths.

Now bring your attention to the feeling of your breath as it enters and leaves your body. Try not to change or deepen your breath in any way, just simply notice it. You might notice your breath as it enters your nostrils, or bring your attention to the rise and fall of your chest or belly. Allow the physical sensation of your breath as you breathe in and out to be an anchor for your attention. Keep your attention in the feeling of the breath, with a sense of gentleness and kindness.

While feeling your breath, various thoughts will undoubtedly also compete for your attention. Consider them as just on the edge of your attention, not at the center of it. You can tell them you'll give them your full attention later! For now your focus of attention is on the feeling of your breath. Be aware of how it feels to spend time just feeling your breath without having to do anything else. If your mind wanders from your breath many times, gently bring it back to the breath each time. Every moment of mind wandering is an opportunity to practice awareness and acceptance. It is strength training for the mind!

Compassionate Mindfulness of Body

Now release your focus on your breath, let your attention open more widely into your body, feeling your body as a whole in a relaxed way. Become gently aware of bodily feelings and sensations. Without judging or trying to change any of them, just be with them in a kind way with a sense of warmth and friendliness toward them. If you notice a tension or tightness in an area of the body, be with it in a kind way, gradually relaxing into it. You could also imagine breathing out of that area, allowing the tension to release a bit with each exhale. In this way, welcome bodily feelings within a space of deep acceptance.

Compassionate Mindfulness of Feelings.

Now from within your body, begin to notice any emotional feelings, and how they feel in your body. You may become aware within your body of a subtle sense of urgency to get things done, or a feeling of subtle anxiety and queasiness, or worry, a little irritability, sadness, fear, joy or whatever you're feeling. Be aware of the feeling in a gentle welcoming way, without judging or rejecting it, without trying to solve or change anything in it, without ruminating about what it means or why you have it. Gently notice the feeling with a sense of kindness, warmth and friendliness toward it, that demands nothing of it (like a friend quietly listening to a friend). Experience feelings from within this compassionate space of deep acceptance and allowing.

Letting Be

Finally let your mind just fall completely open, letting all patterns of sensations, thoughts and feelings to just be. Relax within this compassionate space of openness, acceptance, and allowing, simple letting all be. When you are ready stretch and get up and have a great day! Each day this week, continue to explore one of these forms of compassionate mindfulness: Body, Breath, or Feelings.

Put special emphasis on learning the mindfulness of emotional feelings from within your body. Try to do so for even just a minute. Imagine yourself just sitting with the feeling in the warmth of the sun.

Curiosity and Joy at Portland Adult Education: An Investigation

Week Five Practice:

Compassionate Mindfulness of Breath, Body, Feelings and Thoughts 4/5/15

Part of learning to notice and accept ourselves involves becoming comfortable in our bodies. The practices introduced in the previous investigations including *Letting Be*, *Receiving Care*, and *Compassionate Mindfulness* can help us to become more skillful in this noticing and accepting. This week's practice will focus on thoughts in addition to breath, body, and feelings. It will be helpful to begin each practice with some kind of mindful movement similar to what we did together or have done that helps you to be in your body.

Compassionate Mindfulness of Breath

Begin by taking three, slow, deep, cleansing breaths. Then bring your attention to the feeling of your breath as it enters and leaves your body. Try not to change or deepen your breath in any way. Just simply notice it. You might notice it as it comes in your nostrils, or bring your attention to the rise and fall of your chest or your belly. Allow the physical sensation of your breath as you breathe in and out to be an anchor for your attention. With a sense of gentleness and kindness, keep your attention in the feeling of your breath coming in and out of your body.

It will be natural for various thoughts to compete for, even demand, your attention.

Imagine them as being on the periphery of your attention, not at the center of it. You can tell them you'll give them your full attention later. For now, your focus of attention is on the feeling of your breath. Notice how it feels to spend time just feeling your breath without having to do anything else. If your mind wanders from your breath, which is perfectly natural for it to do many times, gently bring it back to your breath each time. Every moment of mind wandering is an opportunity to practice awareness and acceptance. Try this for a few minutes.

Compassionate Mindfulness of Body

Now releasing the focus on your breath, let your attention open more widely into your body, feeling your body as a whole in a relaxed way. Become gently aware of bodily feelings and sensations. Without judging or trying to change any of them, just be with them in a kind way, with a sense of warmth and friendliness toward them. If you notice a tension or tightness in an area of your body, be with it in that kind way, gradually relaxing into it. You could also imagine that as you breathe into an area, you are exhaling the tensions from that area with each exhale. In this way welcome bodily feelings within a space of deep acceptance. Try this for a few minutes.

Compassionate Mindfulness of Feelings

Now from within your body, begin to notice any emotional feelings, and how they feel in your body. You may become aware within your body of a subtle sense of urgency to get things done, or a feeling of subtle anxiety or queasiness, or worry, a little irritability, sadness, fear, joy or whatever you're feeling. Be aware of the feeling in a gentle welcoming way, without judging or rejecting it, without trying to solve or change anything in it, without ruminating about what it means or why you have it. You might find it supportive to remember the experiences of connection with someone who saw you in your full potential and wished only the very best for you. And you can imagine yourself in the shower of this deep care, filling every cell in your body with love, as you allow your feelings to just be with you. Gently noticing the feeling with a sense of kindness, warmth, and friendliness toward it that demands nothing of it, like a friend, quietly listening to a friend. Experience feelings from within this compassionate space of acceptance and allowing. Try this for a few moments.

Compassionate Mindfulness of Thoughts

Now shift your focus to thoughts or images arising in your mind that are often also associated with feelings. As thoughts and images arise, try to begin to notice them and label them as merely thoughts, being with them with a sense of kindness, and warmth toward them. Without unpacking, engaging or investigating them, just notice them and welcome them simply as thoughts. The aim here is gently to notice the thoughts as thoughts, with kindness toward them

as such, rather than focusing on their contents. If, for example, you notice yourself thinking about something you need to do later today, try to label this as “thought” rather than getting caught up in or ruminating about it. It might be helpful to imagine your mind as the accepting and limitless sky and the thoughts are clouds moving through. When we begin to notice thoughts merely as thoughts with kindness and without ruminating about them, they tend not to hold our attention for very long. This can allow space for creative insights to rise and be recognized.

Letting Be

Finally, let your mind just fall completely open, like the sky letting all patterns of sensations, thoughts and feelings to just be, floating by like clouds in the sky. Relax with this compassionate space of openness, acceptance, and allowing, simply letting all be.

- Take short breaks of just a minute during the day to reconnect with any of the Compassionate Mindfulness Practices: Breath, Body, Feelings, Thoughts.
- Create at least 5 minutes for a self-care activity each day. It could be 30 seconds of deep breathing, time for a walk outside, or just staring into space and day-dreaming.

Appendix C

This is an example of the somatic component of the practices. You can do any movement that involves slow, gentle stretching with the mind directed to notice the breath and sensations in the body as you move. The point is to connect the body and the mind through the movement at the beginning of each practice session. It could be as small and quick as making a fist when you inhale, open and spread your fingers when you exhale and notice all the sensations felt in the movement.

Mountain Pose

Stand with your feet hip-width apart. Rock back and forth to balance your weight evenly on both feet. Press your feet into the floor. Firm your thigh muscles and lift your knee caps without locking your knees. Extend your spine from the tailbone to the crown of your head, keeping your head and spine in a straight line. Draw your shoulder blades toward one another and then slide them down your back. Notice your collarbones spreading. Actively extend your arms along your torso. Slightly dip your chin towards your heart and soften your gaze. Take a few breaths here, allowing your breath to be slow and steady.

Downward Facing Dog

Before beginning this pose, you will want to place a chair against a wall with the seat facing you. Stand in Mountain Pose, facing the chair, about two feet away from the chair.

From Mountain pose, raise your arms above your head toward the ceiling and stretch your entire body. As you exhale, fold forward by bending from your hips. Place your hands on the seat, or grip the sides of the chair. Press your hands firmly into the chair as you walk your legs back until your body forms an inverted "V." Raise your heels, bend your knees and lift the sit bones toward the ceiling. Pull the hips as far away from your hands as you can, keeping your hands rooted firmly on the chair. Allow your heels to extend toward the floor as you straighten your legs to whatever extent is possible. Relax your neck. Breathe here for a few moments. Then move into Warrior 1 pose described below. Or, to come out of the pose, slowly walk your feet toward the chair. Bend your knees and slowly roll up to standing.

Warrior 1

From Downward Facing Dog, look up at the chair, and step your right foot forward into a lunge, taking care that the right knee is over the right foot and the shin is perpendicular to the floor. Turn your left foot out 45 degrees and extend your heel towards the floor. Raise your arms above your head so that they are parallel to each other, and actively reach up through your fingers toward the ceiling. Hold this for a few breaths. To come out of the pose, place your hands back on the chair, turn your left foot forward, and step back into Downward Facing Dog. Repeat on the other side.
(Heineberg and Makransky, 2015. p. 32)

Appendix D

The following are practices that I did with the teachers once a week for the third semester. This is the script for the podcasts which I sent to each teacher who came to the 15 minute practice session.

Practice #1: **A Basic Relaxation**

Done daily or even a couple times a week, this systematic muscle relaxation practice will take you to a deep level of physical, mental and emotional rest.

1. Lie (or sit) in a comfortable position and breathe deeply and smoothly.
2. Continue to breathe deeply and smoothly as bring your awareness to the following areas and rest briefly at each of them. Have your breath be easy and without strain.
 - Crown of the head
 - Forehead, sides and back of the head
 - Ears, temples
 - Eyebrows, eyelids, eyes
 - Nose (rest and pause for a few breaths)
 - Cheeks, jaw
 - Mouth, lips, tongue
 - Chin, throat
 - Sides, back of the neck
 - Pit of the throat, shoulders
 - Upper, lower arms
 - Hands, fingers, fingertips (rest and pause for a few breaths)
 - Hands and arms
 - Chest, sides upper back
 - Lungs, heart, heart center (rest and pause for a few breaths)
 - Abdomen, sides, lower back
 - Buttocks, low abdomen, hips
 - Hip joints, upper legs
 - Lower legs, feet, toes (rest and pause for a few breaths)

3. After relaxing and breathing to the toes, travel back upward, moving your awareness through the legs to the base of the spine.
4. Slowly travel up along the spine, relaxing the deep muscles of the back, shoulders and neck.
5. Rest at the back of the head and then at the crown of the head.
6. Breathe as if the whole body breathes. Let the feeling of breathing fill your mind as other thoughts come and go. Relax your mental effort. When you are ready, get up and have a great day.

This practice can be done for as little as five minutes to as long as you like. It is great to do when you get in bed at night. When you become familiar with it, you can scan through your whole body for a brief restorative break during your day.

Practice #2: **Receiving the Healing, Transforming Power of Love**

Bring yourself to a comfortable position. Begin to notice your breath. Feel the inhalation and exhalation in your nostrils. Notice how your body moves as it receives and releases the air. Now, with your breath, just move through your body as if you were greeting a good friend. Breathe into your feet and bring your awareness to any sensations in your toes and feet and ankles. Hello, feet how are you. Gradually let your awareness move with your breath up your lower legs, knees, and thighs: hello legs, how are you? Now feel your hips, your back and front torso and breathe into your chest, upper back and shoulders. Hello torso, how are you? Bring your awareness and your breath down one arm and wrist and hand and out the fingers and into the fingers and up the other arm to your shoulders and neck, greeting this part of your body with friendliness and warmth. Now feel the back of your head, the top, your forehead eyes, nose, cheeks, jaw, mouth and chin. Hello face. Feel your whole body, alive and breathing supported by the chair, the building, the earth.

Bring to mind a person with whom you felt a connection. It can be someone you know and love, a student or a stranger. It can be an animal or a place where you felt safe and a deep sense of comfort and well-being. In this connection you feel them wishing the very best for you and seeing you in your full potential. If you cannot call such an occasion to mind right now, imagine what it would feel like to be seen fully for who you are. Envision this person or animal or place sending you the wish of love, the wish for your deepest well-being, happiness and joy.

Recalling this experience as if it were right in front of you now, gently open to the wish of love for you. Imagine this wish as a gentle radiance, like of soft shower of healing rays. Bathe your whole body and mind in that tender radiance, all the way down to your toes and fingertips. Bask in the loving energy of that wish. Trust it. You don't have to trust every aspect of the person who is seeing you in your full potential, just focus on the wish of love that they radiate, the simple wish for your well-being and happiness.

Receive the gentle healing of that radiance. As other thoughts and feelings arise, let them be enveloped in this loving luminosity. No matter how you think you are, what you think you

deserve; all such thoughts are irrelevant now. Just accept this wish of love for your deepest happiness. Trust this wish more than any limiting thoughts of yourself.

Let yourself rely on this love, the goodness it comes from and the goodness it meets in your heart. Absorb the soft, healing energy of love into every cell of your body, every corner of your mind. Bathe in this, heal in this, rest in this.

While receiving the radiance of this energy, mentally repeat the wish for yourself in words like this: “May I have the deepest well-being, happiness and joy.” Like everyone else in this world, you most deeply need and deserve happiness and well-being, Repeat this wish for yourself while accepting the same wish from the one with whom you felt a connection. Gradually let go into the radiance. And when you are ready wiggle your toes, fingers and stretch and have a great day!

(Adapted from meditations experienced on retreat with Lama Willa Miller and Lama John Makransky in January 2015 at Wonderwell Retreat Center.)

Practice #3: **Lake Meditation**

Lie down in a comfortable position: feel supported. Touch base with the flow of your own breathing and the sense of your body as a whole. When you are feeling ready, picture in your mind's eye a lake, a body of water, large or small, held in a receptive basin of the earth itself...held, contained. The body of water may be small or large, deep or shallow, blue or green, clear or muddy.

If there is no wind, the surface will be flat and mirror like. It reflects sky, clouds, trees and holds everything in itself. Momentarily. Wind stirs up the surface, and the reflections are disturbed. Disappear. Sunlight may still sparkle in the ripples and shimmering waves

When night comes, it is the moon's turn to dance on the lake or when the wind is still, to be reflected in the lake along with the outline of trees and shadows. In winter the lake may freeze over, yet be teeming with movement and life below.

As you lie here, breathing and establishing an image of a lake in your mind's eye and allowing yourself, when and if you feel ready to bring the lake inside yourself completely so that your being merges and becomes one with it. So that all your energies for this moment are held in awareness with openness and compassion for yourself in the same way that the lake's waters are held by the accepting earth herself.

You are breathing as the lake, feeling its body as your body, allowing your mind and your heart to be open and receptive, moment by moment to reflect whatever comes near to be clear all the way to the bottom. You are experiencing moments of complete stillness when both reflection and water are completely clear and other moments when the surface is disturbed, choppy, stirred up; reflections and depth lost for a time, and through it all you lie here simply observing the play of the various energies of your own mind and heart.

Notice the fleeting thoughts and feelings, impulses and reactions which come and go as ripples and waves; noticing their effects, in contact with them just as you are in contact with and feel the various changes and energies that play on the lake, the wind, the waves, the light, the

shadows, the reflections, the colors, the smells. Notice the effects of your thoughts and feelings. Do they disturb the surface and clarity of the mind's lake? Do they muddy the waters and is that okay with you? Isn't having a rippling and wavy surface part of being a lake?

Might it be possible to identify not only with the surface of the lake, but with the entire body of water so that you become the stillness below the surface level. The stillness below the surface, at most, experiences only gentle undulations even when the surface is whipped to frothing.

In the same way in your practice and in your daily life, you can be in touch not only with the changing contents of your thoughts and feelings, but also with the vast unwavering reservoir of awareness itself residing below the surface of your mind.

The lake can teach us this, remind us of the lake within ourselves. If you find this metaphor to be of value, you might like to use it from time to time to deepen and enrich your practice. You might also invite the lake image to empower and guide your actions in the world as you move through the unfolding of each day carrying a vast reservoir of mindfulness within your heart. Dwelling here in the stillness of this moment we can be the lake in silence, affirming our ability to hold in awareness and acceptance, right now, all our qualities of mind and body just as the lake sits, held, cradled and contained by the earth, reflecting the sun, moon, stars, trees, rocks, caressed by the air and wind which brings out its sparkle and vitality, moment by moment.

Adapted from Kabat-Zinn, 2002

Practice # 4: **Mountain Meditation**

Bring your attention to your breath. Notice where you feel your breath. Does your attention go to your nostrils? Your upper lip? The movement of your chest? Ribs? Belly?

Move your awareness through your body from your head to your toes. Notice any place of tightness and tension and see if you can imagine it flowing out of your body in the next three exhalations.

Feel a firm foundation, supported by the chair or bed and the floor. Lengthen your spine as you breathe up through the crown of your head.

Now picture in your mind's eye, as best you can, the most beautiful mountain that you know, have seen or can imagine. Let it gradually come into shape and notice how massive, solid and unmoving it is. It is beautiful from up close and from afar.

Whatever its shape or appearance, you are just sitting or lying and breathing with the image of this mountain, observing and noting its qualities.

When you feel ready, see if you can bring the mountain into your own body so that your body here and the mountain in your mind's eye become one. You share in the majesty and stillness of the mountain. Invite into your body a sense of uplift from deep within your pelvis and spine with each breath, become a little more a breathing mountain, unwavering in your stillness, completely what you are beyond words or thoughts. A centered, rooted, unmoving presence.

During the movement of the sun and moon, and through all the patterns of weather, the mountain just sits, experiencing change in each moment. On the mountain is life and death, predator and prey: people come and go, like the mountain or not, and through it all the mountain continues to sit, unmoved by the weather, by what happens on the surface, by the world of appearances.

In the same way as we sit in meditation we can learn to experience the mountain. We can embrace the same unwavering rootedness and stillness in the face of everything that changes in our own lives.

By becoming the mountain in our practice we experience constantly the changing nature of our mind and body and of the outer world. We can link up with the mountain's strength and stability and use its energies to support our energy to encounter each moment with mindfulness, clarity and balance. The weather of our own lives is not to be ignored or denied. It is to be encountered, honored, felt, known for what it is and held in awareness. And in holding it in this way we come to know a deeper silence, stillness and wisdom. Mountains have this to teach us and much more if we can come to listen.

Adapted from Kabat-Zinn, 2002

Practice # 5: **Loving Kindness Meditation**

This is a practice to cultivate love, unconditional, inclusive love; a love with wisdom. It begins with ourselves and gradually extends to include the whole world. This is the ideal, pure love that everyone has in potential. We begin with loving ourselves, because we can only extend to others what we are able to offer to ourselves. The process is first one of softening, breaking down barriers that we feel inward toward ourselves, and then those we feel toward others. One of the aims of this practice is to feel good, so make sure you are relaxed and comfortable.

Begin by lifting your chest toward the sky as you inhale, feeling your back curve. As you exhale, push the small of your back backward as you curve forward. One more time bend backward and forward feeling, the sensations in your body, the movement of your spine. Come to a comfortable position. If you are seated, feel your feet on the floor, your buttocks on the chair and your spine lifting up. If you are lying down, be sure you are comfortable and feel yourself supported by the bed or the floor.

Now bring your awareness to your breath. Just notice the next few breaths. Feel the sensation of the air coming in your nostrils. Notice as the air leaves your body; do you feel a difference in the temperature of the air? Where do you feel movement in your body as the breath comes in and leaves? Don't try to force the breath to be any way. Just notice what you feel, imagine the breath is breathing you.

Now, still aware of your breath, broaden your awareness to include your body. Notice any tension and with each exhale imagine the tension draining out of your body. Let your attention move from your head to your neck and shoulders, arms, and fingers, front and back of your torso, hips, legs, feet and toes. Feel yourself in your body right here, right now.

Still aware of your breath and your body, expand your awareness to notice your mind as if you were lying on a field, looking up at the sky and watching your thoughts as clouds moving pass your awareness. As best you can try not to get caught up in your thoughts. If you do, as we all do, just bring your attention back to your breath. That is the practice of mindfulness, to notice our thoughts and when we get caught up in them to bring our awareness back to the point of focus which in this case is the breath.

Now bring to mind a person with whom you felt a connection where you felt they saw you in your full potential and wished the very best for you. Imagine their wish as a gentle radiance, like a soft shower of healing rays. Bathe your whole body and mind in that tender energy. All the way down to your toes and fingertips. Bask in it. Trusting this wish of love more than limiting thoughts of yourself, receive it into your whole being. Absorb the healing radiance and energy of love into every cell of your body, every corner of your mind. Bathe in this; rest in this.

Bring your awareness to your solar plexus, the space between your breastbone and your belly button. Breathe in and out from that area, as if you are breathing from the heart center and as if all experience is happening there. Notice if you feel any areas of mental blockage, numbness, self-judgment, or self-hatred. Then drop beneath that to the place where we care for ourselves, the place where we feel the care of connection, the place where we want strength and health and safety for our selves.

Focus your inward gaze toward your heart and repeat:

May I be free from harm and danger, both inner and outer. May I be safe and protected.

May I be free from mental suffering or distress.

May I be happy and whole.

May I be free from physical pain and suffering.

May I be healthy and strong.

May I be able to live in this world happily, peacefully, joyfully, and with ease.

Gently wiggle your fingers and toes, hands and feet, stretch, open your eyes and have a great day!

Variations on the Loving Kindness Meditation

Allow yourself to truly feel these good wishes for yourself.

May I be free from suffering.

May I be at peace.

or

May I be free from suffering.

May I be healed.

or

May I be free from suffering.

May I be full of joy.

or

May I be free from suffering

May I make wise decisions.

or

May I be full of confidence

May I feel at ease.

You can use any wish that works with what is going on in your life right now.

Practice # 6: **Heart Breath to Reduce Stress**

This practice comes from the HeartMath Institute in Boulder Creek, California. It is great to combine with the Loving Kindness Meditation. Since 1991, using the latest technological advances, HeartMath's research has proven that the heart is more important than the brain in overall health and even in cognitive function. Emotions are faster and more powerful than thought. Thinking clearly from the brain is very helpful, but feeling positively from your heart can give an amazing boost to health and creativity. Research has shown this benefit can happen immediately as well as over time. It has been proven that, practiced on a daily basis, it can help lower blood pressure, strengthen the immune system and positively impact diabetes among other things. This tool can be practiced in less than a minute, on the spot in stressful situations. The heart rhythm sends information to the chemical, electrical and neurological centers in our body. If you consciously shift your attention to a positive emotion, like appreciation or care, or if you allow your thoughts to return to a feeling of a cherished memory, your heart rhythm changes immediately. The electromagnetic field of the heart can be measured from between 6.5 feet and almost 10 feet from the body. If you have what Heart Math calls a coherent heart rhythm, it has a positive effect on people near you. We really can do something to change the energy in a situation.

The Practice

Begin by moving and stretching in any way that feels good to your body. Breathe as you stretch and notice how your body feels. Bring yourself to a comfortable position. You can be sitting or lying. Feel your body supported by the chair or bed or floor. Make sure you are comfortable.

First just notice your whole body sitting or lying here. Feel your body making contact with the chair or the bed. Audibly exhale and imagine all the tension leaving your body. Breathe into your head, neck and shoulders and exhale the tension out your arms and fingertips. Breathe into your chest, upper back, belly and lower back; exhale and let any tension move out with the exhale. Now breathe into your hips, legs and feet and exhale any tension out through your toes. Give your body permission to let go of doing things and relax into a mini vacation for these few minutes.

Now expand your awareness to your breath. Let it be natural. Imagine that the breath is breathing you. Simply be present to your breath. Let it feel effortless.

Now arrive at the here and now with your mind. As best you can let go of thoughts about the past. Stop planning and anticipating the future. Give yourself permission to just be. Other than being aware, there is nothing at all to do!

Gently bring your attention to the area around your heart. Shift your breathing so that you are breathing in through the heart and out through the solar plexus. Imagine the breath coming in through your heart and going out through your solar plexus. Continuing to breathe as naturally as possible and bring to mind a time in your life when you felt genuine appreciation for something or a person with whom you felt love and caring either from them or for them or both. It can be any moment of felt positive connection. As you continue to breathe in through your heart and out through your solar plexus, feel those feelings coming in to your heart and being

pumped throughout your body. Visualize these feelings not only filling every cell in your body, but also radiating 6-10 feet out from your body.

When you feel your mind wandering, gently focus your breathing back through the heart and solar plexus and reconnect with the feelings of care and appreciation. If you have five or 10 more minutes, stop the podcast and continue breathing into your heart and out through your solar plexus. If you need to go back to your day, may you return refreshed and renewed as you gradually begin to wiggle your fingers, toes, hands and feet, stretch and have a great day.

This is a great practice to begin the day before you get out of bed. It can be a way to set a compass for the day. Imagine the feeling of care and appreciation riding on your breath as it is coming in through your heart and out through your solar plexus. When this practice is done for 5 to 15 minutes a day, it can have a significant impact on your health and wellbeing.

On the spot stress relief

You can do the practice in less than a minute. This is a very effective way to interrupt the negative impact of stress. There are 3 steps:

- 1.) Shift:** Bring your attention to your heart, breathing in to your heart and out through your solar plexus.
- 2.) Activate:** Think of a time when you felt a positive connection of appreciation or care and feel the feeling as you breathe in and out through your heart.
- 3.) Radiate:** Send the feeling of care into your heart, through your body and imagine it radiating out for 6 to 10 feet beyond you.

Practice #7: **Stopping Practice: Stop, Tune in, Open, Proceed**

This is a simple and easily adaptable practice to help reduce stress and tension and give ourselves a min-retreat right here, right now at any moment during the day. The first part is to actually **Stop**. Stop whatever you are doing, thinking, saying, alone or with others. The next part “**T**” is to **Take a breath** or take a moment or **tune in**. Breathe, pause, and remember we have a body and not just a busy mind. We directly and intimately encounter whatever is here, without judging it or needing it to be different.

Once we have stopped and tuned in, we are ready to be **Open** to our own sense perceptions, thoughts and emotions, and then the whole wide environment in which we find ourselves. It can be “Oh! How wonderful” or “Oh! How awful!” The important part of opening is not whether we like or dislike what is happening, but that we are seeing what is happening clearly. Finally there is “**P**” to “**Proceed**”. After the clarity and spaciousness of our widened view, we know what to do. We know what action to take or not to take action.

The Practice

Stretch and move in any way your body wants and bring yourself into a comfortable position sitting or lying in bed. We are going to do this slowly, giving ourselves time to sink into each part of the **STOP** practice both for our own self-care right now and also to become familiar with the steps so we can call on them any time during the day. Feel yourself come to a **STOP**. “**S**” Your body is still. As best you can, your mind is still. Sometimes to still the mind it helps to give the mind something to do. Let your mind scan your body and notice any sensations. Begin with the crown of your head, forehead, eyes, cheeks, mouth, jaw. Move through your neck and shoulders, arms, hands and fingers. Notice any sensations in your front upper body, back upper body, lower back and belly. Finally bring your awareness to your hips, legs, feet and toes. Feel your self stopped. “**T**” tune in to your breath. Feel your breath moving in and out of your body. Feel your body receiving and letting go of the breath. Imagine the oxygen in your breath moving throughout your body, sending nourishment to all the cells in your body. At the same time allow yourself to be aware of where you are right now. Feel the space around you, notice any sounds, smells or even textures against your body. We are practicing directly and intimately encountering whatever is in front of us without judging it or needing it to be different from what it is right now. For this moment we are with it as it is. Now that we have **stopped**, and **tuned in** we are ready for “**O**” to expand our awareness to be open to everything. First notice your own sense perceptions, thoughts and emotions. Just be with whatever is, as best you can. Now expand your awareness to the whole wide environment in which you find yourself right now. You may like or dislike what is happening. Either is okay. The important thing is to see clearly what is really happening. Finally “**P**” Now that we have been in the clarity and spaciousness of our widened view, we may more clearly know what to do. We **proceed** if that seems the wisest choice. Sometimes an insight arises and we act. And sometimes the best thing is to do nothing.

And now the action is to wiggle your toes and fingers, stretch, get up and have a wonderful day!

Practice #8: Welcoming the Unwelcome Parts of Ourselves

The purpose of this practice is to find a way to welcome difficult feelings with kindness and compassion which can permit them to heal. Before beginning, try to recall a feeling of pain or suffering you have been experiencing recently, an emotion that comes up while struggling with some difficulty in your life. Examples can include any experience of pain or turbulence, feeling like you have failed at something or let someone down, feeling overburdened or overwhelmed, feeling anxious, not liking yourself for the way you responded to something or someone. Other possibilities include feelings of being judged or self-doubt.

Bring yourself to a comfortable position and feel yourself supported by the chair or bed, wherever you are. Feel your body as a whole, scanning your awareness from the crown of your head, slowly through your body to the bottoms of your feet. Feel your breath coming in and going out. Bring your awareness to your mind and as best you can let your mind just relax and watch the thoughts arise and fall away.

Now recall a person with whom you felt a positive connection. From this person, or it could be an animal or even a place, you felt a deep sense of caring for your whole being. As best you can, feel the feelings of being cared for, let them come into your body right here, right now. Imagine the caring energy both above you and behind you showering every cell in your body with a deep wish for your well-being. Imagine that you are receiving a gentle shower of loving wishes, a healing energy that permeates your whole body and mind, enveloping you in care and compassion. Let yourself just open and accept that wish and energy into your whole being with every part of you loved in its totality.

Now let yourself become conscious of a physical pain anywhere in your body, or of some anxiety you might feel about your body or health or about something you need to do. It may just be a nameless discomfort you wish would disappear. Sense how this feels in your body and mind. Then let the feeling of pain or anxiety be embraced in the compassionate energy of your caring person, place or pet. Let all areas of tension relax under its healing warmth.

Now bring to mind a suffering feeling you have been experiencing recently while struggling with some difficulty in your life. Sense how it feels in your body and mind. Imagine you are just sitting with this feeling and as best you can welcoming it. "Hello, sweetie pie. Have a seat. We will just sit and breathe together. It's okay, I won't try to fix you or shut you up or send you to the basement." Now let this feeling of pain or anxiety be embraced in the compassionate energy of your caring person, place or pet. Let all areas of tension relax and be cradled in the warmth of deep, unconditional caring.

Now let the image of the person, place or pet fade, and let yourself simply let go into the feeling of loving care, acceptance, and deep allowing. Take a moment to enjoy being at ease and complete in this way.

Now wiggle your fingers, toes, hands and feet, stretch and have a great day!

Practice #9: **Remembering the Most Important Thing**

“The most important thing is to remember the most important thing.” Listening to the call of our heart is to connect with our deepest aspiration. For most of us this takes time and attention. We may unfold layers of more immediate wants and fears before we arrive at the source, the light of our heart’s deepest desire. As we begin to hear and inhabit this aspiration by remembering what matters most to us, we feel more alive and free.

Find a comfortable way of sitting or lying and allow yourself to relax and be at ease. Notice your breath and feel your body from your head to your toes. Now bring your attention to your heart. Is there a sense of openness or tightness, of peace or anxiety, of contentment or dissatisfaction? If there is something of particular concern or importance going on in your life, or simply a strong emotion, allow that to express itself. Perhaps at first you will be aware of wishing your partner would act differently. You might have a difficulty with a student and be delighted that the end of the year is in sight, or you may long to be free of chronic pain. You may be wanting one of your children or a good friend to feel happier or more confident.

Whatever arises, allow it to be there, and with interest, ask yourself: “If I got what I wanted what would that really give me?” Perhaps you imagine if you were treated differently, you would be less reactive and free to be more caring. Or if you were relieved of chronic pain, you would be able to relax and enjoy your life more fully.

Now as if you were sitting with your heart, you might ask directly, “What does my heart really long for?” It can also be helpful to ask, “What matters most to me in this life?”, Or, “If I were at the end of my life looking back, what would be most important about how I lived today.... this moment?” As you ask these questions, sense that you are addressing your inquiry directly to your heart.

After asking, simply listen and be aware of any words, images or feelings that arise. As best you can, be patient. It can take some time for the mind to open out of its habitual ideas about life and connect with what is most alive and true. As you listen, you may need to repeat several times, some version of “What does my heart long for?” and then listen in receptive silence to what arises. As you listen, stay in touch with the feelings in your body and particularly in your heart.

Your aspiration will probably express itself differently at different times. You might feel a longing to love fully or to feel loved, to be peaceful, to be helpful, or to be free of fear and suffering. There is no “right” aspiration. For example, you might become aware of the yearning to write poetry or paint or listen to opera. This would be in service of the deep aspiration to live a creative, vital life. What is important is to tune into what is most true for you in this moment.

This signs of arriving at a clear intention or deep aspiration are a felt sense of sincerity, energy, flow or “Aha!”. You might feel an inner shift that gives you fresh resolution, openness and ease. If there is no real sense of connecting with what matters, that is fine. You might sit quietly and open to whatever naturally arises. And it may come to you later in the day or night.

If you sense you’ve arrived at what feels like a pure and deep aspiration, allow yourself to inhabit the fullness of your longing. Feel the very essence of your longing in a cellular way as it expresses through your whole body and being. When you are ready, wiggle your fingers and toes, stretch and have a heart-full day!

Practice #10: A Pause for Presence

Presence is the felt sense of wakefulness, openness, tenderness and kindness that arises when we are fully here and now with our experience. *Wakefulness* is the basic consciousness that is aware of what is happening. It is the intelligence that recognizes our embodied experience which is changing moment by moment.

Our *openness* is the space of awareness in which life takes place. It recognizes, without judgment, what is happening and allows our emotional life to be as it is. Like the sky when weather systems come and go, the open space of awareness is unstained by the changing expressions of life moving through us. *Tenderness* is the natural sensitivity and capacity of awareness to express warmth. Tenderness allows us to respond with compassion, love and awe to whatever arises, in all its beauty and sorrow.

These qualities are really not inseparable, they are like a sunlit sky. There is no way to separate the light of the sky from the space it illuminates; there is no way to separate the warmth we feel from the space and light around us. Light, space and warmth are all inextricable expressions of a whole, just like wakefulness, openness, tenderness, and kindness are inextricable expressions of presence. Aliveness and creativity flower when we inhabit presence.

A natural entry to presence is through our bodies. You can do this short practice anytime you have a bit of quiet and privacy. During the day you can reconnect to it anytime you remember and just take a breath and say to yourself, I am connecting to presence.

Bring yourself to a comfortable position with your eyes closed or slightly open. Take three conscious breaths. Inhale long and deep, filling your lungs and then exhale slowly. With each inhale bring in nourishment, clarity and ease. With each exhale feel the tension in your body move out through your arms hands and fingers, hips, legs, feet and toes. Sense a letting go of any tensions in your body and mind.

Invite your awareness to fill your whole body. Can you imagine your physical form as a field of sensations? Can you feel the movement and the quality of the sensations.....tingling, vibrating, heat or cool, hard or soft, tight or flowing? Take a few moments to bring your full attention to this dance of sensations.

Now let your awareness open out to the space around you. Can you imagine receiving a symphony of sounds, letting it wash through you? Can you listen to the changing play of sounds, not just with your ears but with your whole awareness? Take a few moments to bring an open attention to listening to sounds.

With your eyes closed, let your awareness receive the play of images and light at the eyelids. You might notice a flickering of light and dark or certain shapes, shadows or figures of light. Take a few moments to attend to seeing.

Feeling your breath and sensing the space around you, be receptive to any scents that might be in the air. Discover what it is like to smell and receive the odors present in the surrounding area.

Now let all your senses be wide open, your body and mind relaxed and receptive. Allow life to flow freely through you. Let yourself listen to and feel your moment to moment experience. Notice the changing flow of sensations, sounds, aliveness, and also the background of presence that is here. Let yourself appreciate this awake, inner space of presence. If you have time, you can turn off the podcast and take as long as you like. When you are finished, sense the possibility of bringing an alert, open awareness to whatever you are doing next. Wiggle your toes, fingers, move your hands and feet, stretch, open your eyes and have a wonder-full day!

Adapted from *True Refuge* by Tara Brach, Bantam Books, 2012.

Appendix E

This is some of the written feedback from the teachers who participated in what turned out to be 15 weeks of mindfulness practice to investigate the possibility of transforming the negative effects of stress. I asked them what they found helpful, what didn't work for them and what would they change to make it better. There was a lot of positive verbal feedback and everyone would like to continue in the fall and maybe find some way to offer it to everyone on the staff who would be interested.

Teacher A:

I find that, instead of getting up and hurtling myself into the day ahead, I'm more centered. The meditation helps open my mind so that I'm not just doing, but a bit more aware of and responsive to what's going on around me. During the day, if I'm stressing about something, I stop to breathe for a moment. Even one conscious breath helps calm me down, brings me back into my body and opens my mind. No one ever knows I'm doing it, but it helps me immensely.

Changes come incrementally, but I do think I'm sleeping even more deeply than before, that I'm more focused, and a bit calmer. Meeting regularly with the group felt like community building as well as personal care. The podcasts were great. I could listen to them anytime I had my iPad with me. -- in the car, or at home. I certainly felt more relaxed.

In the first few weeks, I did feel energized as well. Now, not so much, but it could be because I am not doing it every day.

I tried to focus on positive interactions and "caring moments". This really helped me think about the positive things that are happening every day rather than all the negative ones. Even one positive interaction makes up for a lot of negative ones. Thank you for caring about us and helping us to care for ourselves.

Teacher B:

Some of what I got from joining you for 4 of the 5 weeks was tools/imagery for finding some calmness when chaos was reigning. I've taken an image that you gave us and used it when I was feeling overly busy to take a moment, close my eyes and breathe. Images that have stuck with me the most are the "golden" shower and connecting with a person or place.

I think your often repeated use of "that's OK" was also calming.

The practice has given me a sense of possibility, that it is possible to achieve some slowing down of my mind, without a huge input of time, but rather a simple increase in awareness of how I am operating.

It has just been so valuable to take the time on Mondays to really pause and to take it in with others. I think I find that energy of the group with its collective intent very valuable. Even though we only met for fifteen minutes, it has really been a lovely way to connect with a variety of people from all across the school.

Teacher C:

The demystification of what meditation really is. I've been curious about / dabbled in meditation by downloading 20 min. Oprah/Deepak Chopra series and never making it past session #2 or #3 because who has 20 min.?? I also downloaded a meditation app onto my phone, which gave an inspirational prompt to think about for 2 min. I could do this, but as the time allotment progressed on the app from 2 min. to 4 min., I often found I would simply read the motivation prompt but not be able to sit for the full 4 min as I would often get interrupted.

Teacher D

So you helped me by saying "it's OK" or "it's still meditation" if you just do 2 min. at a time! How empowering! Sometimes I was able to meditate more than once a day. Knowing that it was just for 2 min. made it accessible to me. I think the energy in the building has definitely changed for the better since we have been doing this!

Teacher E

Teaching a way to deal with strong, intense emotions like fear, anger and resentment through the meditation that talks about bringing up those strong emotions and then thinking about a caring connection .. interlinking the two and caring for that strong emotion, looking at it, instead of trying to suppress it. I can't express how grateful I am for this. This has been a key tool for me in helping me "keep it together."

I have a double alarm. This past week, I set the first alarm five minutes prior to the second alarm and recognize that five minutes is my mindful breathing time...and it's worked!

It has had a positive domino effect in that I have joined my neighbor in a morning walk 4 out of 5 mornings this week. I have not been able to be that committed to walking in MONTHS!

And of course that promotes a more positive morning, which promotes a better "place" from which to encounter my day.

Teacher F:

I don't know if the meditation gave me more energy, however, it kept me from "riding on that train of emotions" .. it kept me grounded. It takes a lot of energy to follow through with intense negative emotions like fear, anger and resentment. Those are very draining, especially when you have children around and you can't openly express them or talk about them. So I guess meditation helped me to not waste energy on such emotions, if that makes sense.

I haven't cried much and that is my default expression of intense emotion. Again, I think it was the regular practice of meditation and paying attention to intense emotions in a caring way that helped with this. Meditation keeps the pressure cooker from building up, which for me, is released through tears.

Thank you so much for sharing this experience and your time. I would love to keep it up in the fall. Thank you so much for doing it and continuing with us each week. It added to our feeling of community

Teacher G:

Taking time out from the crazy busy day to stop, meet with colleagues and breathe. It also helped me to relate to those colleagues when stress was high with a "breathe", or "go to the lake", or some other reminder to use what we learned with you to de-stress.

I felt like I didn't do it often enough, but you kept reminding us that even a breath will bring back the feeling.

I can still do this -- and am trying-- take even 1 minute to breathe and recall the feeling of ease.

The pod casts were great. I tried to listen to a podcast in the car before I entered the

building. It made me feel relaxed and ready for the day.

So many of the techniques were helpful for me. I especially like the lake, warm puppy one, STOP, the heart one, just to name a few.

Maybe it was just me, but I felt a reduction of stress in the building. Things haven't changed, but my ability to live with it seems to be stronger.

I was able to use STOP when dealing with an especially stressful student. I think I was able to keep my cool longer.

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