

Mindfulness as a Foundation for Teaching and Learning

Saturday, February 9, 2008

Sidwell Friends School

Washington, DC

Conference Opening and Plenary Panel Presentations

Welcome and Introduction

Richard Brady from the Mindfulness in Education Network (MiEN) opened the conference with the ringing of the bell.

Richard: Welcome. I am from the Mindfulness in Education Network and am a former math teacher from Sidwell Friends. First, I'd like to find out about you all. How far did you have to travel? I see many of you traveled more than 100 miles to come today. Second, what do you do? I see that most of you are professors and teachers--at colleges, schools, and pre-school. There are also administrators, counselors, trainers and consultants in the audience.

Third, what is your experience with mindfulness practice? I see that there is a range, from those who are new to mindfulness practice, have practiced for less than a year, have practiced between 1-5 years, and have practiced for more than 5 years.

[Richard reviewed logistics for the day: rooms, break out sessions, bathrooms, etc. Richard encouraged participants not to take notes, thanking Patricia Langan who would be taking detailed notes on the plenary session to be posted on the MiEN Web site, www.mindfuled.org along with handouts from the breakout sessions].

I am pleased to introduce Irene McHenry from one of our conference co-sponsors, the Friends Council on Education.

Irene: Richard, Rob and I were part of a day of Mindfulness in the San Francisco Bay area at the Lick Wilmerding high school and we developed a vision for bringing this kind of conference to DC. The engine, the fuel, the attention, the dedication and the love for making it happen was Richard, and I'd like to thank him.

The Friends Council on Education has Mindfulness Resources on its website that I'd like to draw your attention to

(<http://friendscouncil.org/Library/InfoManage/Guide.asp?FolderID=345&SessionID={3ACD1D3E-4AC3-4858-B84F-BBEC650FE301}&SP=2>). We link to other websites. The Friends Council includes Sidwell Friends School and I'd like to thank them for hosting today's event. I'd like you to know that the next Mindfulness for Educators Retreat that Richard and I lead will be Jan. 14-16 2009 in Pendle Hill, PA. Save the date and register on the Friends Council website in September.

Richard: Ron Goldblatt of the Association of Independent Maryland Schools (<http://www.aimsmd.org/>) was the next welcomer, but he could not make it because he's sick. But his daughter is here, hi Laura, so Ron is, in fact, here! The final welcomer is Charlie Halpern, the co-founder and chair of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society in western Massachusetts.

Charlie Halpern: Thank you, Richard for your wonderful leadership for this event. The Executive Director of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society is Mirabai Bush, and we are in a search for her successor. We launched the center 10 years ago, with a mission to bring contemplative awareness into mainstream institutions (<http://www.contemplativemind.org/>). We have several programs, including an Academic Program where we focus at the level of college, university, law schools. We also have a Social Justice Program where we work with lawyers, activists, etc. working on civil rights and social justice causes. In our academic program we have sponsored about 130 people in partnership with the Fetzer Institute through grants to bring contemplative practice into a variety of higher educational settings, e.g. architecture schools, religious studies, etc.

I happen to be here b/c I am on a book tour to promote my book "Making Waves and Riding the Currents" to bring contemplative practice into institutions in order to build a more just, sustainable and compassionate world. Monday I go to Brown University--as you know, it is at the forefront of bringing contemplative practice into higher education. It is the first university since the renaissance to allow contemplative studies to be a major (http://www.brown.edu/Faculty/Contemplative_Studies_Initiative/). Their introductory course has 35 students enrolled and a waiting list of 50.

On my tour I've observed the situation is radically different than 10 years ago—the world has changed dramatically, thanks to the efforts of you and others. The new picture of the future: mindfulness has gained a much higher level of understanding and acceptance than previously, e.g. Time magazine (<http://www.time.com/time/covers/1101030804/>) and Chronicle of Higher Education (<http://chronicle.com/free/v52/i09/09a01001.htm>) have each featured major stories on meditation over the last few years. My own book has been excerpted from the New York Law Journal to the Shambhala Sun. The scientific research in neuroscience and applied research in kindergarten to grade 12 settings create a great platform for contemplative practice to be more integrated into the education system. Thank you again, Richard, for putting together this conference.

Richard: There are a few authors here today, and their books will be on sale at lunch.

Plenary Panel Presentations

Richard: Our first speaker is Kimberly Post Rowe. Kimberly is a mind-body teacher in Maine and the Executive Director of Five Seeds.

Kimberly Post Rowe

Kimberly: Over the last few years at Five Seeds, we've been working to bring mindfulness practice into health care and, particularly in education (<http://www.fiveseeds.org/>). We specifically work in public schools, where, you know, words like "meditation" are not accepted. We created a curriculum "A

Settled Mind” that removes the word “meditation,” and call it guided relaxations for stress reduction. Another program is called The Listening Group. These groups target at-risk teens: Through the common language of music, they learn how to express authentic feelings, building self-confidence, resilience, and respect for themselves and others. They listen to music they like, listen to each other, and listen to themselves. We have mentoring programs in Maine, so The Listening Groups are able to be funded through this avenue. Another program for teens, Teen Zen, is ridiculously popular. We travel to schools and youth organizations throughout New England, running 1 hour sessions on stress reduction that introduce mindfulness as an appropriate coping mechanism. We have even set up a Facebook group so that the teens can continue to stay in touch and talk about what they have learned, and are continuing to learn.

Now, a lot of people have asked for scripts to read in the classroom. These are included in the curriculum guide, and also are on a CD if you are shy about reading them. Just dim the lights and play the CD!

I was asked to introduce mindfulness, which is a practice that utilizes the mind-body connection. [Kimberly then did an exercise to illustrate the mind-body connection.]

Exercise 1: Please close your eyes. Imagine you are holding a lemon in your hand. Look at that lemon and admire it. Look at the color, the texture of the skin. Perhaps you want to imagine you are moving it in your hands and feeling it. Lift it to your nose and smell it. Imagine you are taking a knife and slicing it in half. Lift up the lemon and smell its freshness. Now plunge your teeth into it and feel the juice splashing across your tongue and dripping down your throat. Open your eyes.

How many of you produced saliva? That is the mind-body connection.

We are dealing with major stressors in our home-lives and schools. “No Child Left Behind” has elevated stress levels of teachers. They need a way to effectively manage that stress. As we look inside ourselves and learn how to be with each other in a peaceful way, it helps us to grow compassion and awareness of the interconnectedness of us all. Mindfulness means being mindfully aware and in this present moment. Not thinking about all the work I have to do this afternoon and what I'm going to cook for dinner in 8 hours. It's about being present in this moment, and being present not only for our bosses, children, spouses, friends, but also for ourselves. Okay, let's do another exercise.

Exercise 2: Please get yourself very comfortable in your seats. Please close your eyes, but if you are uncomfortable with that, lower your eye lids and soften your focus. Tune into the sounds around you. Listening to the many layers, even in silence there is a lot going on. Notice how your body feels right now. Perhaps you have the urge to shift to get more comfortable, and that is great. Notice the surfaces upon which your body rests. Notice the rise and fall of your body as you breathe. Tune into the natural rhythm of your body. Notice if your mind is jumping around--that is okay. Whenever you notice your mind wandering, just bring it back to the rise and fall of your body, as you breathe in and out. Notice how with each exhale you settle down a little bit more into your seat. Feel your forehead smooth. Feel your jaw relax. Release your tongue from the roof of your mouth. Let your belly soften. Pay attention to how you feel right now, not just physically. When you are ready, you can slowly open your eyes.

Children of all ages are drawn to this practice because it's authentic, it's real. But I think it's very important as educators to develop our own practice. We need to walk the talk, so I encourage you to do so.

David Levy

Richard: David first worked in industry, then turned to teaching. He is a professor at the University of Washington's Information School. He is one of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society fellows Charlie mentioned. Welcome, David.

David: I teach in Seattle. Richard and I have known each other for nearly 20 years. We met in 1992 at Plum Village, Thich Nhat Hanh's retreat center. I represent the university sector at this workshop. I'd like to tell you about my own journey before I tell you about the course I was able to create and teach with the help of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. I received my PhD from Stanford in computer science and was a researcher at Xerox's Palo Alto Research Center--very famous for inventing the networked personal computer in the 1970's and the technologies we use now such as laser printing. In 2000 I took my first academic position in Seattle. If you were to look at my "public" c.v., this is what you'd see, what's considered "practical." But I also have a "shadow" c.v. about which I am willing to tell you most things, such as the fact that I went to England to study calligraphy and bookbinding and am one of the few people that have a degree in calligraphy and bookbinding. That was my first step in developing a contemplative practice. In more recent years, I have been studying Aikido, which is one of the more contemplative of the martial arts. I have also been a lay chaplain at Stanford hospital.

The way these two threads have come together -- high tech and the contemplative -- is in my concern about the world we are creating through technology and our need to live a more balanced, fulfilling and contemplative life. In 1995, I noticed something happening in culture, e.g. the internet was coming into use, email was more prominent, more people had cell phones. This raised cultural concerns for me--information overload, fragmented attention and the acceleration of life. And I've seen these problems become more and more prominent in the last 10 years. Does anyone not know what I am talking about? We live in a culture that pulls us away from being present.

It is a new form of environmentalism -- I call it information environmentalism -- which you might think of as a new branch of the environmental movement for our inner world. Information environmentalism is in its infancy, like the natural environment movement was when Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*, came out 40 years ago.

Thus far I've organized two conferences on this subject. The first, in May 2004, was called Information, Silence, and Sanctuary. The second, in March 2006, was called Mindful Work and Technology. And now, I've developed a curriculum on mindful work and technology. In June we will hold in Seattle an event called "No Time to Think." (I've also written a paper "No Time to Think," about contemplative scholarship, which is available on the web). Seven years ago I came to the academy and was stunned by how little time I had to think. Teaching, research, and serving on committees essentially leave zero time to think.

As for my course on information and contemplation, you can find the syllabus on the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society website. In the course, I try to put 3 threads together:

1. Introduction to a variety of contemplative practices: breath meditation; walking meditation, where you not only focus on breath, but also your feet touching the ground; contemplative reading and writing; and body awareness, etc.

2. A series of readings concerned with looking personally and culturally at problems like information overload and fragmentation in one's own life.
3. A series of exercises, some done in class and some done at home, to tie together methods of contemplative practice with our use of information technologies: how to use contemplative practice to look at information overload and fragmentation in own life.

An example of an exercise for university students: I ask students to keep a log of their use of one form of technology (email, texting, cell phone, tv, etc.) and what was happening in their body as they approached the activity, doing the activity, and after it was over. I ask them to look for patterns in the log, then write it up. What I found, as just one example, among 13 students (2 PhD, 10 masters in library science, and 1 undergrad), was that many of the students tended to go online when anxious or bored, and that they became more tense the longer they were online.

The next unexpected, exciting thing, was that as students noticed their patterns, they also started thinking about developing personal guidelines. So I asked them to write up those guidelines and share them with each other. What was great about the exercise is that it wasn't imposing anything on people, but instead helped them to bring mindfulness to their practices to develop their own understanding and guidelines. As a final class project, I asked them to do the same exercise with another technology.

After teaching the course once at the Information School, I approached the head of the UW libraries, Betsy Wilson, and asked her if I could try teaching it to librarians. Betsy liked the idea, and declared it a professional development course. I've offered it twice to UW librarians. And I'm about to experiment, at Ohio State, with creating a one-day workshop, based loosely on the same curriculum.

I see several Center for Contemplative Mind in Society fellows here, are there others? What we are all discovering is that by taking these remarkable practices and bringing them into our own lives, as personal practices, and tailoring them to the environment in which we are operating, we can offer more to the world, which, of course, is what we all really care about.

Florence Meleo-Meyer

Richard. I was privileged to participate in a conference like this in San Francisco last February sponsored by the Association for Mindfulness in Education. One of the other presenters was Florence Meleo-Meyer, who is senior clinician at the Stress Reduction program and a director of *Oasis*, an international learning center for professional education and training, at the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester (<http://www.umassmed.edu/Content.aspx?id=41252&linkidentifier=id&itemid=41252>). This center was started by Jon Kabat-Zinn, who is one best known writers on the use of contemplation in society. Florence, can you come up here and stand closer to the light?

Florence: It's an interesting invitation to be invited to stand in the light! We are all standing in the light. I am very grateful for the care that went into organizing this event and the intention that brought you all into the room.

The Center for Mindfulness in Medicine has been bringing contemplative practices and present moment awareness into medicine for 30 years. As we turn toward bringing this contemplative

awareness into education, we are just at the beginning. It will take every one of us to listen to our hearts as to what brought us into this room.

I'd like to share 2 pilot programs that we ran this past year. One is for teachers and the other is for students.

Teacher pilot program. Kimberly mentioned one definition of mindfulness. Let's pause and reflect on the words we use. Mindfulness is awareness of the present moment experience with acceptance. Take a moment now and notice what is present. Just notice what's here and what's needed now. If you'd like to stand up and stretch, that is great.

While there is an innate capacity for mindfulness, awareness is not something we need to attain; it is already here. It is full. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is a way of training our attention to access what is already here. It is the way to know what is here and to bring hospitality to that. To know what is present and turn toward what is here with hospitality. There is a non-instrumental way that is already here. There is an instrumental way that we can train to access this capacity. As we do this, we have more energy--spend less energy about what might happen, what did happen, etc. We will have more energy for problem solving, healing, etc. When people take the MBSR course, there are no big bells and whistles, but there are vivid, fresh moments of lucidity.

The programs I want to share with you are adaptations of MBSR for teachers and teenagers, made possible by the generosity of a private donor. I want to bring the programs alive with the words of a participating teacher, a woman I'll call Maryann. Maryann is vibrant, educated with a sense of humor. After a hard day with her students, she'd say "you know, kids, I was a younger woman when I came into the classroom." Maryann taught 29 years, 21 of which were at the same school. Maryann shared that through MBSR, because of behavioral changes, she lost 5 lbs and her blood pressure lowered.

Exercise 1. Take one or both of your hands. Look at your hand as if for the first time. Notice the form, shape, maybe the tones, colors, lines. Our hands--something so familiar that we've had since we were born. And here it is. Would anyone like to share something you noticed?

Audience member 1: There was a sense of de-personalized nature. Like it's outside of me.

Florence: So you felt a little removed from it.

Audience member 2: My first response was like looking at two old friends.

Florence: So there are two ways of seeing: one is seeing hands as object outside yourself, and the other is like seeing something familiar and part of yourself.

Audience member 3: People say you can see your parents in your hands, and I see them there.

Florence: So looking at your hands reminds you of your parents. Let's go back to Maryann. She says as a child her mom said "you need to smile." Maryann said "Now I feel like I'm smiling because I feel I have more options about how to react to people, nonsense. I take more delight. I've always been into nature. Driving to work for 21 years, I pass this tree at the intersection, and now I notice it--I've noticed it has brightly colored leaves, but now, with no leaves, I appreciate its structure--it's a tremendous tree.

This illustrates the possibility of being present and waking up to what is actually here. Colette said "I've had a wonderful life. I just wish I was there for more of it."

Exercise 2: Let's go back to your hands. Clench your fist for me. Anybody want to share what you notice as you clench your fist?

Audience member 4: My whole body is clenching.

Florence: Anyone else notice that? [Editor: many people raise their hands.] Okay, back to Maryann. She described herself as a "fixer" who rushes in and gives advice. In the middle of the course, she was visiting her father in the hospital, and her mother was there. Sharing with her mother about the problems they have, she noticed she was sitting with palms open on her lap. "I realized I had my hands in my lap and they were open. They are not like with a pen all knotted up. There is nothing else I can do other than be in the moment. My hands are open so I am open to what will happen. I don't have to manage what is happening at this second. When I realized this, I thought, "Oh my god, I really am."

So what was this MBSR course? The Center for Mindfulness in Medicine has been looking to move into the field of education. With all our work in medicine and business, we have only stepped in and out of education. We worked with Pamela Seigle, the head of the Northeast section of the Courage to Teach program. Parker Palmer's Courage to Teach program is about replenishing teachers

Teachers Program. We worked at the Columbus Park School in Worcester, in a low income high crime neighborhood, which is led by a principal who is visionary and courageous. She had taken the MBSR and Courage to Teach programs, and she knew about replenishing teachers. In the pilot course we had 10 teachers for 8 classes, 2.5 hours each day after school with an orientation session. We gave teachers a 10-15 minute practice on CDs. (In the MBSR program, practice goes 40 minutes, but we were concerned teachers may find 40 minutes a day too long.)

In the teacher training, teachers came to class, practiced everyday with the CD and had a workbook.

As Kimberly said earlier, it's walk your talk, and Charlie said it's sitting your talk. It is said there are only 4 ways to meditate--sitting, standing, lying down and moving. We did all of these, plus mindful eating, mindful listening, and mindful speaking, to bring practice through to every activity of teachers' lives. Using aspects of the Courage to Teach program, we brought mindfulness practice in through poetry, song, etc. Many teachers practiced using the 10 minute CD more than once a day. We let this be their work, e.g. gave certain practices they could use in the classroom their way.

One time, when I was at the Mindfulness in Education Conference in San Francisco, I was waiting for trolley. Along came a trolley that had a plaque on it saying "Coming and going, if you want to see, stop," by Thich Nhat Hanh. Let me share how teachers did just that:

Teacher 1. "I am so quick to react to kids. I am too quick to fix things. It's stopping and breathing and space to take different approaches that allows me to see different alternatives."

Teacher 2. "Stand up, give yourself a hug, and then we are going to start all over again."

Teenager Program. The oldest participant in MBSR was 97 and youngest around 16 years old, so we decided to offer a program just for teenagers. Aldous Huxley depicts in his book *Island*, a future society where people were awake to each other and had compassion and could recognize unity among

each other. To help them remember, the society trained mynah birds that would swoop over the island and say "here and now." In developing the teen curriculum, we recognized the stress that teens are under. Given the state of technology, what do teens need to learn? Memorization is less important. What's missing is the teaching of compassion. To develop the course, I consulted with psychologists, pediatricians, and contemplatives. We applied to UMass Medical School for IRB approval so that we could conduct research around the program. Our goal was to recruit 40 adolescents aged 14-18 through pediatricians, school counselors and psychologists. Initially there were 12 participants and 6 completed the course. (Other activities of the teens got in the way).

Participants were co-creators of the course. Classes were 2 hours one time per week for 9 weeks. The course's 4 main areas: recognition (training of attention), connection (present moment sensitive to interconnection of body and relationships, compassion for self and others), mastery (proficiency in knowing one's self, it's about one's life more deeply, expressing authenticity). Example practices included:

- body tour
- mindful stretching
- meditation (sitting and walking). attention can be flexible, like laser or floodlight
- mindful eating
- mindful listening/speaking
- respect-gratitude-love (loving kindness)

We worked with sensation, emotion, and thought to build awareness.

Exercise 1. Notice a pleasant or unpleasant experience. Talk to another participant about it. Name what your body felt, what emotion was present, and what thoughts were. Uncouple the feeling, emotion and thought. This helps develop the skill to identify feeling, emotion, thought.

Teaching modalities we used included:

- mynah birds—Aldous Huxley's reminders on the island, "here and now."
- freeze frame--present moment awareness. walking and ringing bell freeze, what's present.
- Montessori bells--concentrate. walk with patterns more and more challenging. notice if bell rings or not.
- ice experience--work with strong sensation, impulsivity. Hold hand in ice, notice when you want to bring hand out, can you breathe and keep hand in for longer? Surfing the urge with smoking, can you breathe through the impulse? Use with child birthing. Be present with strong sensation.
- popular music to normalize learning.
- thought bubbles. see this as our experience: that things rise, suspend, then fall away.

One activity was if kids could write letter to a friend about what they were learning and experiencing. One girl wrote: "In this class we've practiced mind meditation. Through a series of silent yoga and stretching, we've come to terms with our bodies and minds. We are mindful of everything around us and more mindful of things outside the classroom. When things get tough, we've learned to stop and

focus on breathing. So with everything you are dealing with right now, I suggest you give mind a chance. Your self misses you.”

Interactive Discussion with Panel Members

[Audience members were invited to ask the panelists and Richard Brady questions]

Question 1: Has anyone done research, or written papers on mindfulness in everyday activities like raking leaves, etc. There is a certain contemplative aspect of doing a task, and I wonder if people have done research on it.

Florence: In our stress reduction program, participants are invited to bring mindful awareness to an everyday activity such as raking the leaves and washing the dishes, or washing the leaves and raking the dishes (but then you are not so mindful). Small wonders and infinite opportunities we have to notice. I meditate to see the flowers in the cracks in the sidewalk.

David. I came across the book *One Who Is Not Busy* by Darlene Cohen, Zen teacher in the Bay area.

Kimberly. See the book *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*. The first time I was ever exposed to the idea that when you are driving, just drive. That was huge for me, as I grew up in the Boston area.

Question 2: I teach in community college and am new to contemplative activities with my students. One thing I focus on to help them be more contemplative is the physical environment. In addition to talking about de-cluttering the mind, we need to talk about how important the physical environment is, e.g. organizing our desk before we can write. In class, I ask the students to put anything unrelated to the class, e.g. cell phones, lunch, etc, out of sight. I introduce the importance of lighting, physical arrangement of seating, etc. Do you have any comments on that?

David. I have found de-cluttering the physical environment is very important to my practice. How can we create a “work sanctuary,” an environment that reminds us to be mindful and about what is sacred. I was at the Library of Congress in the Jefferson Building Reading Room—it is so beautiful under the dome. My office was next door to the reading room, and I went in every day. Each time I felt being pulled into a quieter state.

I’ve thought about what can we do in the online environment to de-clutter as well. It is designed to be the opposite. What choice do we make about how we open windows on screen? In the reading room, it occurred to me that it is visually busy with sculptures, book shelves, etc, and yet there is a mystery of how it fits together for such a quieting effect.

Question 3: I am curious to hear your response. Mindfulness depends on a fairly healthy relationship with the body. The older students I teach in yoga are very uncomfortable with sitting quietly; they

fidget and have to work on their nails, etc. They are very much in their heads, not their bodies. I wonder, do we stop relating to the body in healthy ways as we age?

Florence: I don't think kids have it easier than adults. They just have had less invitation from our culture to separate their bodies from their minds. See how media helps separate them, such as Jean Kilbourne's documentary "Still Killing Us Softly," (<http://www.mediaed.org/videos/MediaGenderAndDiversity/KillingUsSoftly3>). If you open popular magazines you see media telling you your hair should be like this and your armpits are not right. James Joyce once wrote this about one of the characters in his book, "Mr. Duffy lived a short distance from his body."

Kimberly. One important topic is how to bring body awareness in when working with children who've been abused. For those children, you can't start grounding awareness with body first—you need to work into it. For instance, when doing guided relaxation, rather than having them do a full body scan, ask them to practice breathing into their hands and their feet as an initial way to ground awareness in body.

Florence. I'd like to add that for people who've gone through trauma, whatever trauma they may have encountered, sexual, accident, etc., you can do a light touch body scan but only with their total permission to not do it. In trauma, there has been trespassing of the will. We want to invoke the subject's will—"I choose not to do this now."

Question 4: Someone already spoke to dealing with mundane things, can you speak to how to sit with the more jagged or hotter emotions in life.

Richard. I teach stress reduction to high school students, using two approaches. One is--I use the analogy of the mind as a TV set. You may have a strong negative channel on now, but that is not the only channel. If it's strong, and the teacher or student can't handle it in mindful way, they are invited to change the channel. I use guided meditation to help the students tune to other, positive channels. They become aware of the emotion of the channel they're tuned to and see they have the choice to change the channel. If, on the other hand, the student or teacher's mindfulness is strong enough, they can embrace that emotion, which is a part of them, like a crying child. Rather than be in denial, I invite them to hold the crying child, the emotion, in their arms with great compassion. Hold a crying part of themselves. Don't try to fix it, change it. Just let it be there. We practice this technique using a very small incident. Sometimes they find they are not strong enough to hold it like a crying child. In that case, the only option is to change the channel. If they continue to practice mindfulness, eventually they will be strong enough to hold that crying baby in a constructive way.

Question 5: Can any of you elaborate on the concept of mindful speaking? What do you do to foster that in students? One of the courses I teach is effective speaking. How can mindfulness help students with extreme anxiety about public speaking?

Kimberly: Perhaps that is what we are supposed to be doing right now.

Florence: May I suggest you invite the practice of pausing. When we can pause and come home to our experience, the body and the breath, it allows a settling, and from that place we notice the fears that are driving anxiety, e.g. am I clever enough? Touch the silence and speak from the silence.

One exercise I've used for adults is to ask one person to be a speaker and another a listener. Choose a topic that has some "charge" so it's not mundane like "what I did on Saturday." The listener at the first layer is listening to the meaning. Then at the second layer he is receiving meaning through the body, e.g. pitch, tone, body movement. Meaning is communicated with something like 7% words. The third layer is listening with the "ear of the heart." Words are happening, the body is expressing, and there is a sitting in presence with the other person. You need a certain facility with mindfulness--comfort being silent.

David. Mindful listening is the foundation for mindful speaking. The deeper I get in my practice, the more I see it as training in receptivity. What it is not is passive--active/passive is not the right distinction. What I've come to feel and notice is that not just speaking, but writing, etc is based on mindful listening, having enough stability to really hear.

Question 6: I teach writing. What popped into my mind is that the "comma" is disappearing. It's a major social problem. Students are in such a rush that they can't pause in the middle of a sentence. The lack of commas signals that.

Question 7. I appreciate how you have presented mindfulness. My experience has shown mindfulness depends on practicing in a community. Have you worked on how people you've introduced mindfulness to can help that capacity of the mind mature in communities?

Kimberly: MiEN (the Mindfulness in Education Network) has been a big part of that. I live in Maine, and feel isolated, but I know thanks to MiEN I am not alone. That is why I helped the teens in my course set up a Facebook page, so they have a community as well.

Florence: I agree that cultivating practice in a group does strengthen individual practice. Teenagers in our program commented that this was an opportunity to connect with people that they never imagined themselves connecting with because they looked different. They feel they now see "who is here."

David: Something I've been doing for 5 years now is I run a reading group at the information school at the University of Washington. We start with 15 minutes of silence. It is a place where students, faculty and staff can come, in the guise of something that is recognized by the academy, where I sneak in some ideas of ongoing mindful community.

Question 8: Richard, I was reading on the plane your paper "Learning to Stop, Stopping to Learn" in which you talked about the immediate payoff students expect with short attention spans. We start something, what happens to it. Do you have students come back and say wow, I see why you taught me that?

Richard. This is a relevant question for any teacher regardless of what you teach: how long do you have to wait to see a result? An earlier form of the paper you referred to is available on the MiEN site, and it will be soon be published in the *Journal of Transformative Education*. We did a mindfulness activity for 5 minutes every math class, either journaling, yoga or meditation. I saw a transformation in the students during course of the year. At the beginning, students thought the mindfulness activities were very weird, especially since it was math class. Most of their journal entries were in the backs of their journals, which I never read. Over the course of the year, they reported that they began to really appreciate the first 5 minutes of the class. They noticed they were clearing space so that during the following 40 minutes they were more focused. It almost didn't matter what contemplative activities they did for those 5 minutes. Some students told me that when they were taking tests in other subjects, they took a couple of minutes out of the time they had for the test to meditate before they started to write. If you do this with your students, you'll see change during time you have the students; you won't have to wait 17 years.

Question 9: I've worked in environments that are directly counter to what the mindfulness practice engenders or requires, including the library in Jessup, MD for the state prison system, and at a hyper achieving school that is very in your head. In those environments, how can we make the "feminine" concepts of mindfulness acceptable when it makes these people feel vulnerable and are perceived as counter to their survival.

David. I agree with you that the mindfulness concepts are receptive, feminine and, thus, interpreted as dangerous. That is why we are doing them!!! I continue to look for new ways to market the ideas in the worlds of university research, high tech, big time funding. I look for new ways to talk about it and to counter perceptions that it is just new age and not serious. Recently I started to propose mindfulness as an antidote to the problem in academia of "no time to think." What does it mean not to think? In the academic environment it is hard to argue that thinking is not important. How can we be more effective at quality thinking? Quality thinking requires openness and receptivity before it can be creative.

Question 10: I am a yoga teacher. My problem is that it is easy for me to get along with people who "get" mindfulness. In early childhood development, I am not only working with the children, but also the parents. The kids who need to "use the comma" more, to slow down, are those whose parents are focusing on pouring more into the children, learning from outside, rather than gaining internal awareness. How to get parents to realize the importance of internal awareness? Without telling them the kids "need" something, since when you do that the parents project even more.

Florence. Help the parents taste this themselves. Help parents recognize where their focus is, extending that to their child. Offer affectionate attention, radical love. We've heard children tell us they move their parents' faces toward them because their parents are like "ya, ya, ya" and don't listen. My sense is that all of us here today are bridge makers. It's an invitation, whether you are new to this or a veteran, there is something about experiencing it ourselves, then finding a way to communicate it.

What is needed is research--what will catch attention, to be able to show through research lower recidivism, higher scores. That may not be *our* goal, but it is a language others speak—a way to catch the attention of the wider audience.

Kimberley: Check out innerkids.org. Susan Kaiser-Greenland is working with that population quite successfully, using the “abc’s” of learning: attention, balance and compassion.