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Incorporating Well-Being into Any Class

In my classes I have implemented weekly guided meditations at the start of each meeting. I believe that a good meditation practice can alleviate much of the stress students feel, and help them develop better ways of coping with stress and anxiety. However, I know that when we are busy, self-care is often the first thing we cut out of our day, and particularly meditation. It is hard to find the time to be still and contemplative in the present moment when your to-do list is pages long. By starting my classes with a quick guided meditation, I can ensure that the students will at least devote 5-10 minutes of their week to their mental well-being. I use guided meditations such as body scans, guided breathing, or visualizations, because I know that law students have a hard time shutting their minds down. By giving them words or actions to focus on, I can eliminate some of the mental distractions they face while meditating on their own. I also show them TED talks throughout the semester on the power of positive thinking, the role stress plays in their performance, and the importance of mindfulness. I think that seeing experts in the field talk about these things in a prestigious setting helps the students with buy-in – if they know why it's helpful, they are more likely to try it. I tell the students they do not have to participate in these meditations, I just ask that they sit quietly while the rest of the class does.

Below are some of the resources I use during these exercises.

YouTube Meditations:

Do Nothing for 10 Minutes (I usually play this for 3-5 minutes)

<https://youtu.be/aXltOY0sLRY>

5 Minute Guided Visualization – Beach Walk

<https://youtu.be/gzCMfZUsoOA>

5 Minute Progressive Muscle Relaxation

https://youtu.be/8pT_gHcgPd8

TED Talks:

How to Make Stress Your Friend:

<https://youtu.be/RcGyVTAoXEU>

All It takes Is 10 Mindful Minutes

<https://youtu.be/qzR62JJCMBQ>

Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are,

[https://youtu.be/Ks- Mh1QhMc](https://youtu.be/Ks-Mh1QhMc)

Guided Meditation Script (this takes about 10 minutes to go through)

This exercise will review three ways to relax under pressure, including calm breathing, relaxing tense muscles, and calming your thoughts. Take a moment to get into a comfortable position.

Start by concentrating on your breathing. Breathe in...and out.

Deeply in...and slowly out.

In...out.

Keep breathing slowly like this. You can slow your breathing even further by counting. Breathe in to the count of four...hold to the count of three...and breathe out to the count of five...

Breathe in...2...3...4...hold...2...3...exhale...2...3...4...5...

Breathe in...hold...breathe out...

Breathe in...and out...

Keep breathing...letting your breath slow comfortably.

You are learning the relaxation skill of slowing your breathing. You can actually feel yourself calming down as you breathe slowly and calmly. This calm breathing helps you focus, and be alert and relaxed. You are learning how to relax under pressure.

Continue to breathe slowly, and every so often, just notice your breathing, and focus on allowing your breathing to slow down.

Now concentrate on your muscles. You may find that you are holding tension in your muscles. Pay particular attention to your shoulders, hands, and jaw.

Consciously lower your shoulders. Let your shoulders relax and allow the muscles to loosen. This act of relaxing your shoulders allows you to become calm because it places your body in a relaxed, easy position instead of a tense one.

Notice your hands, and let your hands be open, loose, and relaxed. Let your arms rest by your sides, letting go of all tension and just relaxing. You are learning how to relax under pressure.

Focus on your jaw. Allow your jaw to rest loosely, so your teeth are not touching. Let your mouth be loose and relaxed.

Mentally scan your body now, noticing any areas that are tense. When you notice tension, concentrate on relaxing that area. Allow your muscles to give up the tension they have been holding. Allow your body to relax. You are learning how to relax under pressure.

Focus on your breathing again...noticing...relaxing. Count each breath again if you like, breathing in to the count of four...holding for a count of three...and breathing out to the count of five.

(Pause)

Now concentrate on your thoughts. Imagine each affirmation that follows, and believe each one to be true. You may want to repeat each phrase silently in your mind. You are learning how to relax under pressure.

I am calm.

I am relaxed.

I know how to relax easily.

I relax whenever I want to.

I handle situations with ease.

I am prepared.

I am focused.

I am strong.

I am confident.

I am so deeply relaxed.

I am so calm and serene.

I concentrate easily on the task at hand.

I easily relax under pressure.

I easily relax under pressure.

I feel calm and relax under pressure.

I am capable.

I am intelligent.

I am worthwhile.

I am skilled.

I am relaxed.

I am relaxed.

(Pause)

Every time you are under pressure, remember to do the three relaxation techniques you have just practiced:

Calm breathing.

Relax your muscles.

Calm your thoughts.

You can relax any time you need to, and the relaxation will help you to concentrate and keep your brain functioning at its best.

You can relax every day, in every situation.

Breathe deeply. Relax your muscles. Calm your thoughts.

(Pause)

Breathe deeply. Relax your muscles. Calm your thoughts.

(Pause)

Now you have completed this relaxation exercise. You can relax again any time you need to, and will experience the most benefit if you practice relaxing every day.

For now, it's time to return to the day head. Slowly reawaken your mind and body, becoming alert and awake while remaining relaxed and calm.

Open your eyes, and look around. Stretch if you want to. Sit quietly for a few moments as you wake up completely.

When you are fully alert you can resume your usual activities, feeling calm and refreshed.