

Prewriting, Freewriting, Collaboration

Using Meditation in the Classroom

Purpose: To develop and maintain the writer's voice in academic writing.

Introduction: Talk about one's inner voice. See James Moffet's chapter in *Coming on Center* on the Inner voice and Meditation. Ask if anyone has had any experience with meditation. Give each person who raises his/her hand a chance to describe what he/she knows. Invite the rest of the class to ask questions as they come up. After everyone who has had some experience has shared, tell them why you think using meditation in a writing class is a good thing. Explain, for instance, how it can clear out a lot of conflicting and confusing thoughts and helps one to focus in preparation for writing - or if one gets stuck, it can help restart the thinking process, overcoming writer's block.

Drawing a picture of a muddy pond on the board, with lots of stuff being thrown in and churning up the waters, and a second pond with the water allowed to stand quietly so that the water can clear up, seems to help explain how the mind can clear up through sitting for awhile quietly.

Procedure: (quiet music optional...Your first session should be about 20 min. long)

1. Have students copy a freewrite topic on paper and then clear their desks of everything but paper and pen.
2. Tell them to sit straight in their chairs, feet flat on the floor, and hands set loosely in their laps. Their shoulders should be dropped and heads erect, but not stiff.
3. Turn off the lights and tell them to close their eyes. Ask the students to think of a 1 or 2 syllable word that means peace or tranquility to them. When they have the word, tell them to open their eyes. This is their "centering word," or pointer.
4. Tell them this is their word to bring their mind back into focus - this is their pointer. If they begin to follow a line of thinking, they can let go of the thought process by simply repeating the word silently.
5. Tell them to take 2 or 3 deep breaths, holding the breath for a moment and then exhaling, letting as much physical tension out of their body as possible. Then have them close their eyes and begin to repeat silently the centering word. As they notice a thought distracting them, they can just return gently to their word.
6. Wait about ten minutes.
7. After about ten minutes, quietly invite them to begin to return to the classroom by opening their eyes. Keep talking quietly, until everyone has opened his/her eyes.
8. Tell them to begin writing. (Turn on the lights.)
9. Have everyone write for 2-5 minutes and then read their writing outloud.
10. Practice in class every three weeks or so.

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Meditation, contd.

Summing up: Remind the class that this is an exercise that they can use on their own to maintain a channel with that inner voice we all have, but which can so easily get lost in ordinary social activity.

Resources in addition to Moffet:

30 Ways to Help You Write, Fran Weber Shaw
(Bantam, 1980) - provides lesson plans

Winning Your Inner Battle, Jeanne Heiberg
(Resource Pub. Inc., 1989)