

SABBATICAL REPORT

SPRING 2023

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This report summarizes my Spring 2023 sabbatical project. Thank you to the Sabbatical Committee and the Board of Trustees for approving my sabbatical proposal which allowed me to participate in Mindful Awareness Practices Classes (MAPs I and MAPS II), incorporate Mindfulness Meditation practices into my daily routine and apply the knowledge from these classes to develop disability and topic specific mindfulness workshops for students enrolled in ACCESS and who take Learning Skills math courses.

I. Background and Purpose of Sabbatical Project

ACCESS supports students with all types of disabilities. In the last ten or so years, there seems to be three categories of disabilities that have grown significantly: mental health, ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorders. There is a concern that the pandemic has increased students with Mental Health Disabilities. We need to be prepared to support students who may have had their disabilities exasperated by the pandemic. According to the Mindfulness Awareness Research Center, science indicates Mindful Awareness can reduce worry, anxiety, forgetfulness, impulsive reactions, and hypersensitivity. With training and practice, you can fine tune your brain to reduce tardiness, fogginess, and confusion. You are naturally present and learn to harness this natural strength of being present. With Mindfulness we use attention to promote and cultivate wellness. It is universally regarded as a good quality. Mindfulness has shown to promote mental health. It is having a positive impact on Psychotherapy. ACCESS students will benefit by having in-house mindfulness support systems embedded in ACCESS services and Learning Skills classes.

II. Completed Components of Sabbatical Project

A. Education: Completed Four UCLA MAPS I and II Course -

1. MAPS I for Daily Living: Six-week online course that provided an overview of Mindfulness practices with a sampling of Mindfulness Meditation and weekly lessons.
 1. Course Dates: 12/19/22- 1/23/23.
 2. Studied various Mindfulness meditation practices:
 - (1) Breath/ Finding your anchor
 - (2) Listening Meditation
 - (3) Walking Meditation
 - (4) STOP Stop, Take a Breath, Observe, Proceed
 - (5) Cultivating Kindness
 - (6) Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation
 - (7) Common obstacles in Mindfulness Meditation practices
 - (8) Research supporting the benefits of Mindfulness Meditation

2. MAPS II Next Steps Improve your Meditation: Six week online course to delve deeper into Mindfulness meditation which maintains and sustains a daily mindfulness practice, how to bring mindfulness into our daily activities, how to develop more concentration, and how more confidence and wisdom can arise through practice.
 1. Course Dates: 1/23/23- 3/30/23
 2. Studied various Mindfulness meditation practices:
 - (1) Cultivating Concentration through various exercises
 - (a) Breathing
 - (b) Labeling
 - (c) Mindful Movement- e.g. flying with arms
 - (2) Incorporating Mindfulness in Daily Life
 - (a) Meditation is support which allows us to be mindful in daily life
 - (b) Combats automaticity and brings you into the present. Our minds know how to do this. When we were very little, we lived in the present. We can re-teach our brains to enter

the present.

(c) Need to increase the time to be mindful in daily life

(d) Bring mindfulness into your life by noticing your physical body (notice your feet on floor).

(i) Our body is always in the present moment. Anytime we can take our mind off the judgment, past, future, anxiety, etc. we are being mindful.

- e.g. take a breath
- Practice Stop, take a breath, observe, proceed

(e) You can also do practices to enhance mindfulness in daily life:

(i) e.g. wash dishes with mindfulness, or brush teeth with mindfulness. Notice hands feeling the dishes touching the water.

(ii) Mindful of physicality.... Touching, sound, breathing

(iii) Incorporate technology into mindfulness... e.g. every time a phone rings, remind yourself to take a breath and go to a mindfulness moment.

3. MAPS- Paying Attention Mindfully

1. Course Dates 1/29/23- 2/19/23

2. Studied various attention practices:

1) Aspects of Attention:

- a) Genes
- b) Environment
- c) Choice Consciousness- Paying attention to your attention

2) "Attentionist" Choosing what they pay attention to. You are aware . A person who knows the value of attention. Energy goes where the attention is. Work to become an "Attentionist"

3) How to listen with Attention Mode: Intentional attention:

- a) Your anchor is what is being said and not who is saying it...The teaching and not the teacher.
- b) Noticing when your attention is going away
- c) Gently lovingly bring it back

4) Exercises in putting your attention where you want it. (e.g. right leg, left arm)

5) Zooming out vs. zooming in to get a different focus on attention.

4. MAPS Applications: Introduction to Mindfulness for Adult ADHD

1. Course Dates: March 8th- March 29th

2. Studied various Mindfulness meditation practices

-In this four-week introductory course, we learned about the brain's unique qualities and natural strengths and picked up modified Mindfulness tools. This educational course was designed with Mindfulness techniques for the ADHD nervous system. It offered practices appropriate to the way the ADHD brain can absorb.

-Learned strategies to help students with ADHD learn time management

-Mindfulness impacts our attention. Attention really matters. Mindfulness builds attention. Most of our life... we are told... "pay attention", but no-one tells us how to pay attention. Mindfulness is really the answer to "how to pay attention". It is not about having an attention that never wavers. It is normal that attention wanders... wired to search for threats. We can learn what to do when we lose attention. It is the coming back that builds up the capacity to have stronger attention. We just need to bring our attention back.

-Teach ADHD students how to bring our attention back. It is a skill we teach and it gets stronger. The more you practice, the easier it gets.

5. Twice Weekly attendance over zoom and through the Hammer Meditation Podcasts sponsored by UCLA MARC Institute. It is a group 30 minute guided meditation where we work towards more peace and clarity and being real.

B. Development

1. Workshop Implementation:

- a) The first part of the ACCESS Mindfulness Workshop will introduce students to the value/ benefits of mindfulness for students enrolled in ACCESS. I am hoping to offer these workshops to ACCESS students starting in the 2023-2024 academic year. I incorporated information on the benefits of mindfulness on attention (specifically students with ADHD), anxiety, depression, and overall psychological and physical wellness. The aim of these workshops is to "hook" students on the benefits of Mindfulness Meditation. I also briefly included some of the research on the benefits of mindfulness.

- b) After the general introduction of the benefits of Mindfulness Meditation, each workshop will follow with a short "sample" of Mindfulness Meditation practices. I will lead the students in guided Mindfulness Meditation practices, so they can start to feel benefits. Below are examples of Mindfulness Meditation practices that I will include in various workshop offerings. I will also utilize the UCLA MARC (Mindful Awareness Research Center) [free daily guided mindful meditations](#) and encourage students to download the free App.
 - i) Overview Breath/ listening
 - ii) Walking Meditation
 - iii) Intentional Attention practice
 - iv) Moving/ Flying Meditation
 - v) Eating Mindfulness
 - vi) STOP Stop, Take a Breath, Observe, Proceed

- c) It is my hope that ACCESS students will feel the value of Mindfulness Meditation and then participate in a group weekly meditation session in ACCESS where we log into the weekly 30 minute facilitated Mindfulness Meditations offered through the

[UCLA Marc Free Drop-In Meditations](#). I am hoping to have a group meditation offering once I have done enough workshops that we have a group of students who want the consistency of weekly group sessions. I am anticipating these group sessions to start in Spring 2024 or before.

C. Effects of Daily Meditation Practice

I carved out a minimum of 20 minutes per day, every day to practice Mindfulness Meditation. At first, it was a chore, but after about 2 weeks, my body and mind began to crave daily meditation time. I can't describe the feeling of calmness and bliss after I complete my daily meditation. It allows my mind to quiet so I could be present in the moment. The value of the sabbatical project to my wellbeing was immense. I have always been a type "A", doer type of person. Meditation allows me to stop and be in the present. I have also learned to practice to be mindful in the everyday moments of life. I stop, look around, and take in the moment. I find myself enjoying the present moments more when I choose to be present. I have learned that there is a specific kind of wisdom or insight that comes from meditation practice. It's not knowledge that comes to us from the outside, it's more of a gut knowing, or an uncovering of the wisdom that's already present within us. When our minds become calmer, more relaxed, freed from distractions and disturbances, we make space for the apprehension of our own inner wisdom. I am thankful to have discovered this "gift" through meditation. I also feel more present in the little miracles of daily life. I have started to notice things I never "saw" before. For example, I have been noticing the tiny changes in trees as they transform from winter to the first changes of spring. My eyes and ears have opened up to the magical subtle changes like never before. .

D. Value of Sabbatical Project to Moorpark College Students

As I have described in my Sabbatical report, I have developed workshops for ACCESS students to learn the benefits of Mindfulness Meditation. I was anticipating this outcome when I began my Sabbatical. What I wasn't anticipating was the benefit Mindfulness Meditation would have on me as a person and professor. I have always thought of myself as a good listener. What I learned through my own mindfulness exploration is that I sometimes am not an active Mindful listener and speaker. I now stop and take a deep breath and actively prepare to listen and speak. My students and colleagues will benefit from a more present professor. I am more able to hear and be present with others.

E. Value of Sabbatical Project to VCCCD District and Moorpark College

The research into the benefits of Mindfulness Meditation is young, but very promising. The practice of Mindfulness Meditation has the ability to cultivate kindness and community. Each person who learns to live Mindfully will be contributing to a civilization of kindness and being present and aware of the moment with curiosity and appreciation. UCLA has adopted many practices of mindfulness to enhance the student, faculty and staff experience. They have a whole center devoted to mindfulness education. It is my hope that my sabbatical project will open up the curiosity into the teaching of Mindfulness Meditation in ACCESS, which will in turn spread throughout Moorpark College and on to the whole VCCCD District. Each person who learns to live mindfully will have the ability to spread their practice of love and kindness and living in the present with curiosity.