

Hi, everyone. I'm a student here at Concordia University. My name is Laura Gammack. And I'm Anne Archambault, part-time faculty in the Applied Human Science department. We're together to, Laura has very kindly offered some time to share some of her insight into some of the contemplative practice we've been doing within the class called introduction to therapeutic recreation. So I have within that particular class and many of the classes I've been getting in the last offering, in the last many years, offering contemplative practice.

And our purpose is to really hear from the students what was the impact of their perception about those practices.

So I just have a few questions for Laura. Within that classroom, we pretty well took 5, 10, sometimes 15 minutes to pause the class and do a contemplative practice. From your perspective, what were some of the benefits? I would say one of the major benefits was doing some hardcore learning and then pausing it and just getting back into the moment because you were in your head thinking about things or thinking about other things distracted. And then your contemplative practice has kind of brought us back into the space again and then for the second half of the class, more ready to learn. Some other professors choose to give a 15 minute break and I think that's good too but it doesn't re-center you back in the same way that yours did. It's very structured break time from the content of the class, kind of experiential learning together as a group and then back into more theoretical components. And if I recall, we did the contemplative practice but we did also do the 10 minute bio break and all that kind of stuff. You mentioned how these contemplative practice brought the group together. Do you feel there were benefits in terms of group cohesion? I definitely think so.

I can't speak to feeling like a group with everybody necessarily but one of my absolute best friends I've made in Montreal is from your class and I'm quite sure that it has to do something with the way that you've structured a class, your contemplative practices, or maybe the way that you let us pick our groups halfway through the semester. I really, really appreciate that. By that point, we already kind of knew who's been here for the classes, who seems like they're on the same level as me. He was paying attention to the lecture content and participating in the activities. So what I hear is the contemplative practice created a pause, which was not like the pause where you just do whatever, but it created a different quality of pause within the classroom that was beneficial. And I hear that you felt more fresh to get back. Yeah, I would say the contemplative practices really took other things off my mind that maybe shouldn't have been there, but were as for going along with the lecture material. Even though therapeutic recreation content is super interesting for me, I mean it's normal that other thoughts end up in my head. The contemplative practices helped to bring some depth into the class in a way that I think kind of did bring the group together into something different than sitting and listening to you speak and listening to the other students ask questions. So it changed the rhythm of the class. You shared some of your perspective.

What about, have you heard from other students, what is your perception of the impact it had on you for other students? Well this friend that I made had you for two courses.

I only had you for one unfortunately. But I know that she was saying you continued them in this other course that you were teaching. It's still a therapeutic recreation focused class, but I believe it's also for other... I've basically been using contemplative practice probably for the last two years in just about every class I teach. If I recall, she was doing a program from the class with me. Yes, I believe so. And I did do the same kind of practice. So I think even though it's like a different course, it's still within applied human sciences and it's still like therapeutic recreation focused. And those contemplative activities midway

through the class still do the same thing. They bring you into a deeper present moment kind of space, a group like activity of some sort to kind of get out of your head. And then jump back into the structured learning, whether it be introduction to therapeutic recreation or introduction to program planning within a therapeutic recreation space. Cool. Thank you. Thank you. You mentioned, because you and I had a conversation over Zoom last week where we talked about doing this, for any time I'm offering these contemplative practice in the class, I'm also inviting students to write a journal. One of the suggestions you made was to give better prompt for the journal or give you a specific prompt after each practice. Yeah, I really love the idea of journaling after each of class, like kind of processing what did I learn in the class, the contemplative activity in the middle of the class, specifically like how did I feel or like was I distracted with other thoughts. I don't know, I feel like some sort of guiding questions, even if there's a list at the beginning of the semester along with the course outline, maybe you pick one of these questions every time after you finish the class to journal about would have helped me. My mind just went kind of crazy with like, I don't know what to write because there's so many things I could write. It creates a focus. Yeah. So and that's noted, and I think it's great feedback.

I appreciate it.

Anything else in terms of the use of the contemplative practice that you feel could support you as a student? Was it better when we did it more in the beginning, in the end? Because there were not always in the middle. Okay.

From what I remember, it was in the middle, but this was a while ago now. Clearly, I don't really remember, but I think for me, like doing some lecture content, because it's a three hour long class, like, and then doing some sort of contemplative activity, another bit of content, then the schedule break, then some more like theoretical class content, and then another one, maybe. For me, that sort of chunking is really helpful with my learning, and I know that. Okay.

Just to bring back to your mind some of the practice you did, and I didn't miss them all here. You might remember some, but I remember the first class we sang together, and I usually share the script.

I write it in front. I can't remember if it's in your class.

It was somebody's birthday, was it? I don't think so. No. Anyway, we sang. Typically, I invite the students to sing together something that most students would know.

We have done some breath-based exercise. We have done some hand movement-based exercise, and sing. I remember too very specifically that you haven't mentioned. There was one that you brought in flowers one day, potentially from your garden, or from somewhere, and each of us got a rose, and that was super cool to look at the rose, and think about the rose, and just very presently be so mindful in admiring this flower that's so beautiful in front of you, going up to get it, and bringing it back to your spot, and just taking again a break from the more heavy lecture content, and just admiring something that is so beautiful in nature in the classroom. The roses one really sticks out in my mind, and also there was one that we read a poem, and this one was really impactful for me because we asked for volunteers, and I put my hand up, and I ended up being one of three people. I think maybe he was the first one to read it, and then there was a guide to read it, and then there was me to read it, and we were all listening to the different ways that people read things with the different emphasis they put on different words, and we were all just presently listening. Potentially you had invited us to close our eyes and listen, and that one was really impactful for me, I think because I was one of the readers, and it was coming towards me, and I was really listening to how the

other two people were reading this poem, and not really able to think about anything else, which was really meditative for me in a sense. Which is part of our process, calming the mind, becoming very much into the present, which is a gift. Yeah, thank you. Thank you for all your content, and way to practice gifts.