



Midsemester Mindfulness: Tips for Mental Wellness

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We are halfway through winter term, midterms are in, and spring break has come and gone. As we journey the second half of the academic year, progressing toward the semester's close, mindfulness is a practice we can leverage to prioritize mental health. By being fully present in the awareness of thoughts, feelings, and sensations minus judgment, mindfulness can offer various modalities to reduce stress and promote mental clarity and focus. Listed below are simple mindful tips to add to your day-to-day routine to help you reach the finish line resiliently.

Mindful Movement

What exactly makes movement mindful? It's about careful attention to bodily sensations while allowing awareness of the present moment during movement. In weightlifting, the mind-to-muscle connection has proven that thinking about your muscles before and during physical movement heightens brain activity and ultimately engages more muscle. Outside thoughts and feelings may arise during mindful movement; the key is to remain present noticing them but never fully engaging.

February's Go Move Challenge, an initiative that encouraged faculty and staff to set aside time from the fast-paced life of academia and challenge themselves with intentional movement, prompted an excellent opportunity for healthy competition. Let's keep the momentum of this competition by mindfully walking through campus, opting for extra stairs, stretching, or taking advantage of classes offered at the **Fitness Center**. Incorporating mindful movement into our daily routine is more accessible than we think, and as we slide down the second half, let's highlight rituals that alleviate body tension and promote mental clarity.





Mindful Breathing

Breathwork is a powerful practice of focused breathing that promotes physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Taking short breaks throughout the day to complete mindful breathing helps to destress and calm the mind and body, serving as a form of meditation. Many multimedia tools and applications have features that focus on breathwork for specific purposes. However, mindful breathing can be as simple as setting an intention to clear the mind with focused breathing of balanced inhales, pauses, and exhales completed in repeated intervals. The use of a timer or relaxing music can enhance this practice. Incorporating breathwork between classes or meetings as a modality for mindfulness can help restore the day, leaving you feeling more at ease.

Mindful Connections

Studies suggest that people with stronger connections are happier and experience less stress daily. Establishing connections from a place of mindfulness can improve even the most challenging relationships. Enhancing connections with mindfulness can be done by being intentional with words, speaking with people and not at them, and using active listening to communicate. Active listening ensures the listener is present without interruption or formulation of a mental response; instead, the goal of active listening is understanding. Other ways to promote mindful connections are speaking without judgment, showing empathy, and paying careful attention to body language. These practices foster compassion and authenticity, leading to more harmonious connections.

As we progress toward the semester's end, prioritizing mental wellness can significantly impact how we reach the finish line. Practicing mindfulness of movement, breathwork, and connection with others can help us end the year even stronger. Implementing these simple tips towards more mindfulness will improve our quality of life, personally, professionally, and beyond.