



The
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Contemplative Teaching & Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice

Contemplative Teaching and Learning

What is it?

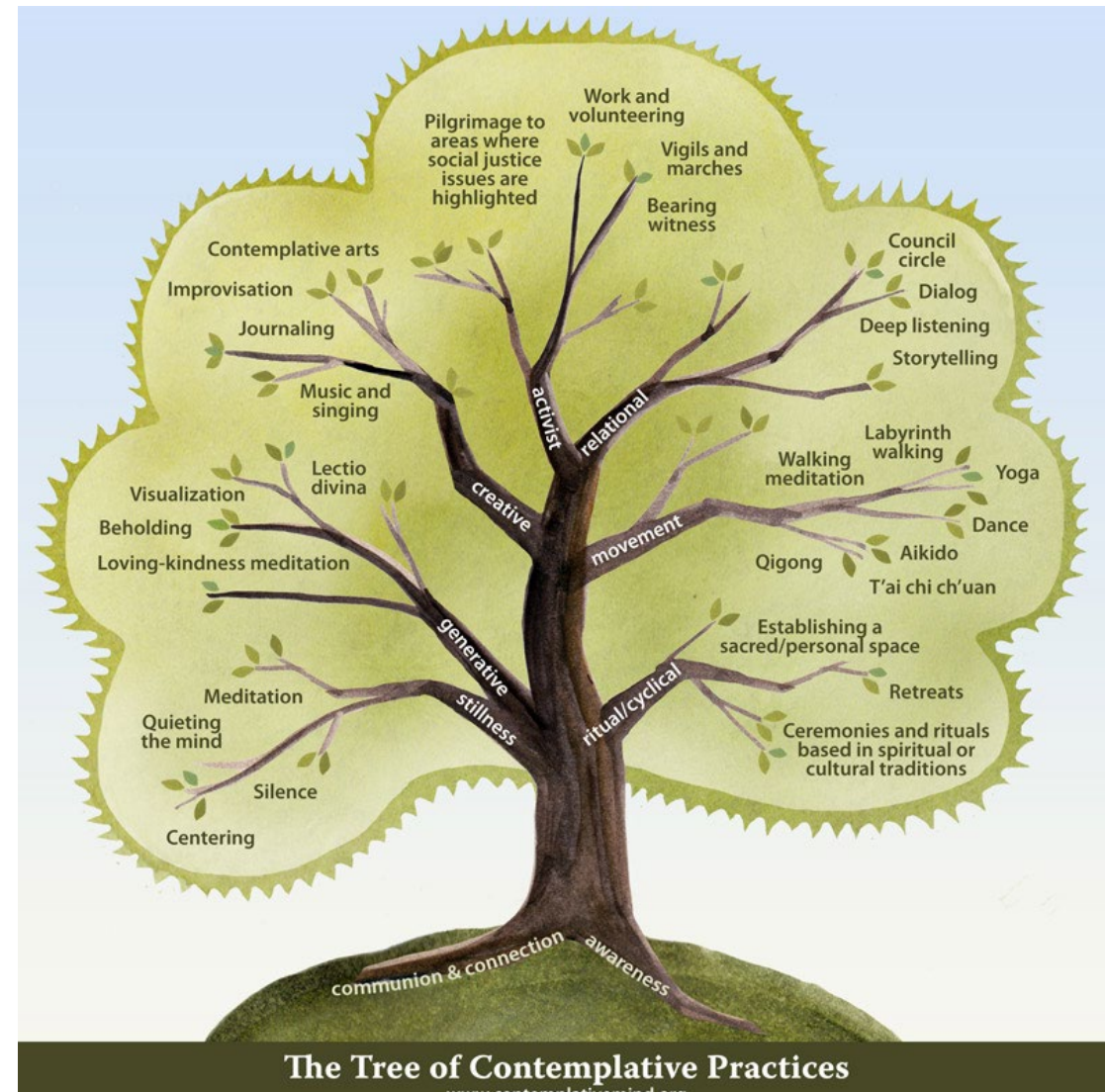
A pedagogical approach that infuses “first-person” activities to focus and create opportunities for greater connection and insight to course material.

At the heart of contemplation is the same quality that is at the heart of all great scholarship: profound attentiveness to the phenomenon that one is trying to understand. – Parker Palmer

What is contemplative teaching?

Activities connect both the *mental* (cognitive) and *affective* (non-cognitive) dimensions of the course material.

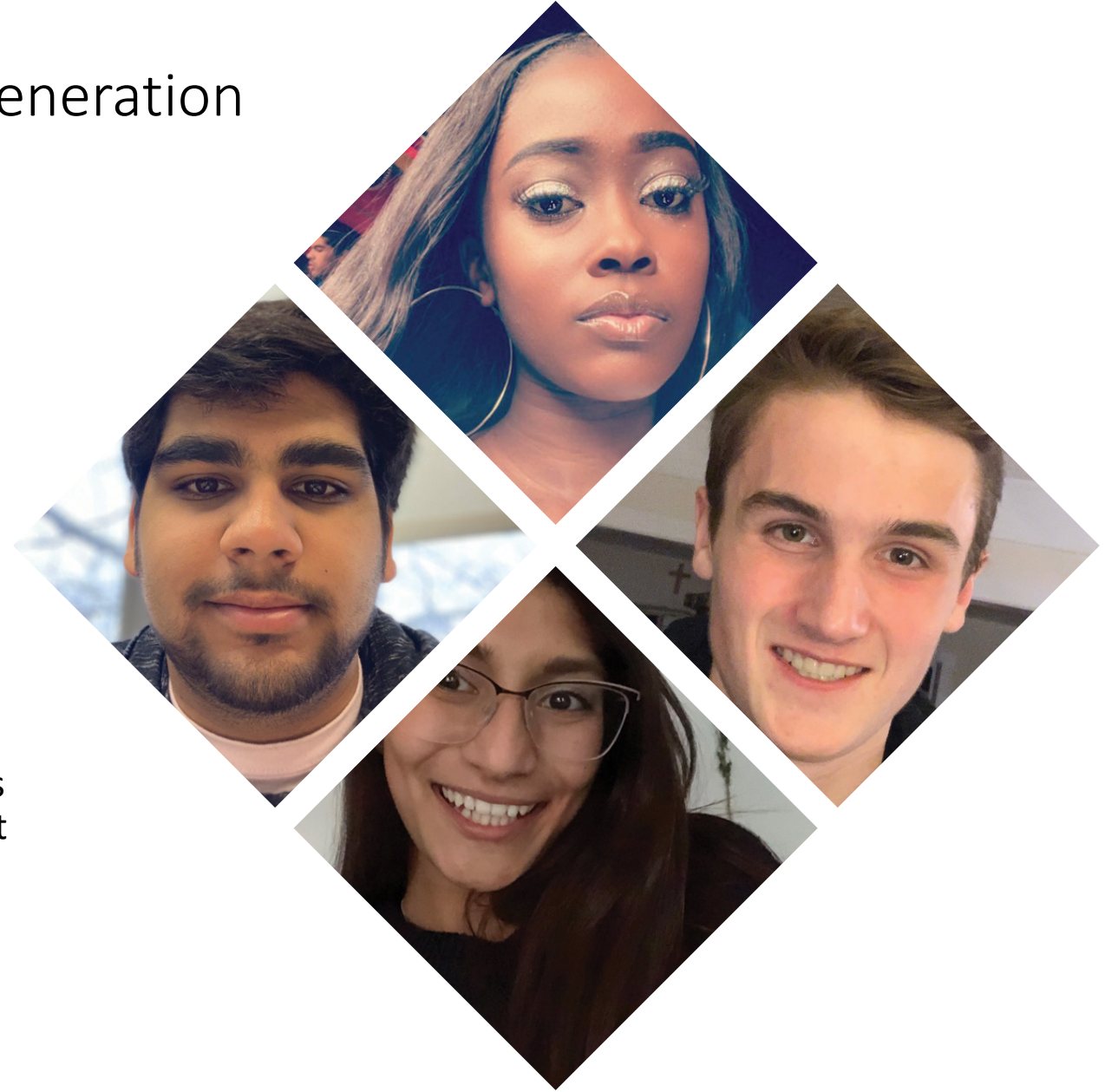
The critical aspect is for students to discover their *own internal reactions* without having to adopt any specific ideology.



Who are our students?

Generation Z - the “post-Millennial” generation

- Born after 1996, the most senior of them will turn 25 this year
- The most racially and ethnically diverse generation
- Liberal attitudes and an openness to emerging trends such as gay marriage and gender identity
- 70% say government should do more to solve societal problems
- Anxiety and depression are rising
- On track to be the best educated in U.S. history
- Academics tops the list of pressures facing young people
 - 61% say they feel a lot of pressure to get good grades (much higher than pressure to look good – 29% - or fit in socially - 28 %)
- Overwhelmingly live in metropolitan area rather than rural areas.
- Technology plays a central and natural role in their lives



The Mission of the University of Vermont

To create, evaluate, share, and apply knowledge.

To prepare students to be accountable leaders:

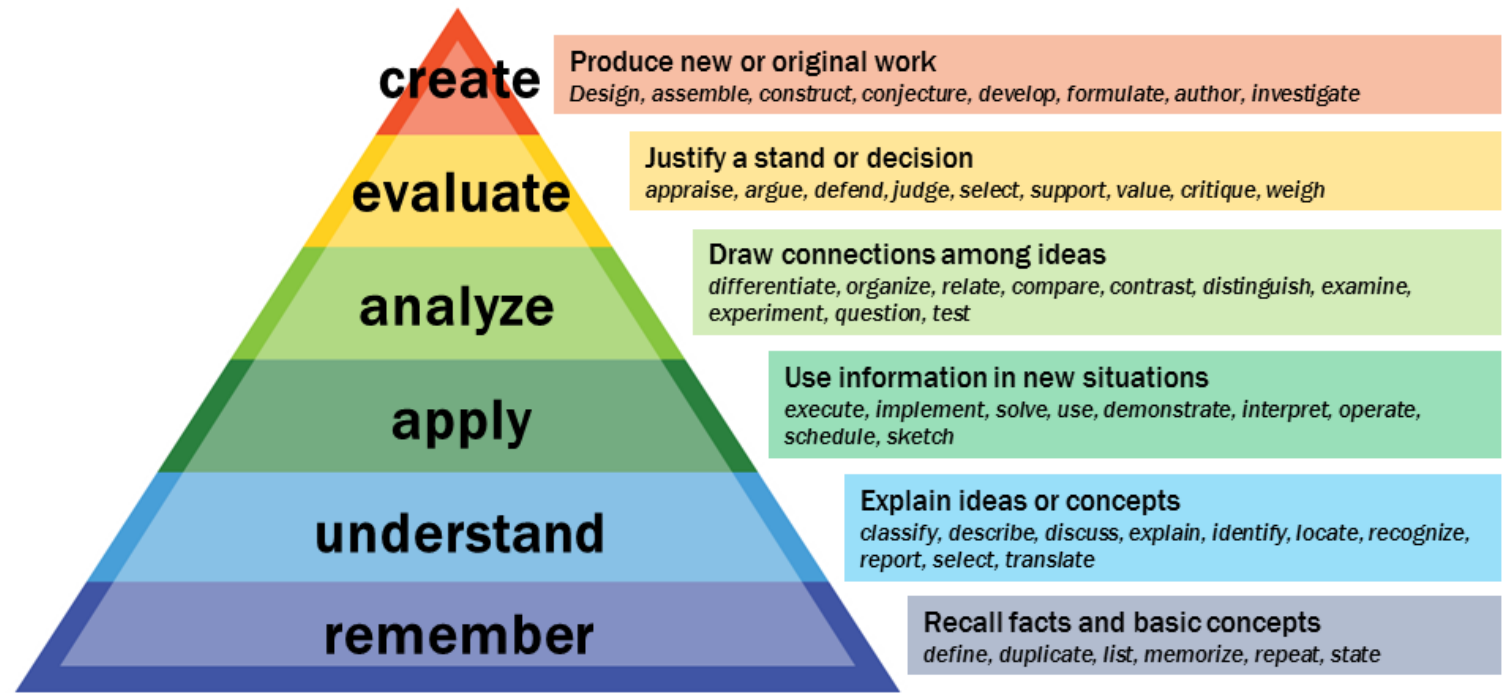
- dedication to the global community
- a grasp of complexity
- effective problem-solving and communication skills
- an enduring commitment to learning and ethical conduct



The
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of **VERMONT**

Why use
contemplative
teaching and
learning?

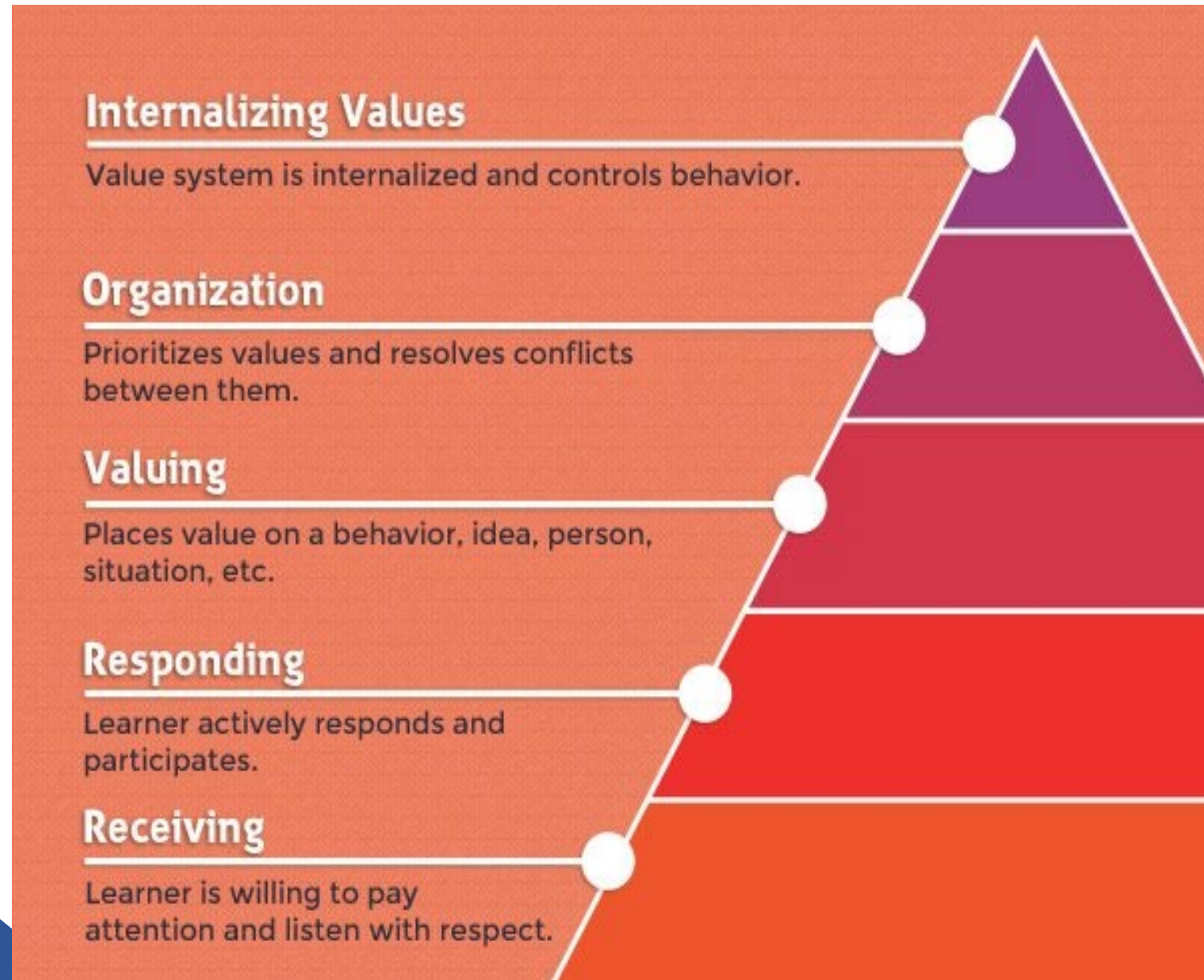
Bloom's Taxonomy



Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching

Scholars of
teaching and
learning call for
assessment of
the *affective*
domain

Krathwohl's Taxonomy - Affective Domain of Objectives



Free writing - a method of inner inquiry

Used to help students observe their emotional, intuitive, or physical responses to course material.

Instructions:

- Write continuously for a set period of time (e.g., 5 to 15 minutes)
- The pen should be constantly moving with no pause to correct spelling and grammar and punctuation.
- Some teachers begin with a prompt.

Free writing - a method of inner inquiry

Writing prompt options

- What are your experiences this past year as a new faculty member at UVM? Focus on your attitude, values, feelings, and emotions (i.e., the *affective domain*).
- How do you see your discipline intersecting with the *affective domain* (i.e., attitude, values, feelings, and emotions) of learning?

Please write continuously for 5 minutes. I will begin and end with a chime. Try to keep your pen moving constantly. If you don't know how to begin, write "I don't know how to begin" and see what comes next. We will follow with dialogue in pairs.


The principles of contemplative teaching practices

- See things as they are
- Be open to new ideas
- Appreciate the contribution of silence to learning
- Value each human voice
- Honor the constantly changing nature of ideas

How do contemplative practices enhance student learning?

Contemplative and mindfulness research has tended to focus on *physiological & psychological well-being*. Studies have shown that contemplative and mindfulness-based activities in college students...

- increase students' attention (Jha 2007; Tang et al. 2007)
- improves cognition (Zeidan 2010) and cognitive flexibility (Moore 2009)
- decrease stress (American College of Health Association, 2015a&b)
- decrease anxiety (Godbey and Courage, 1994)

A large orange circle is positioned on the left side of the slide, partially overlapping the text area.

How do contemplative practices enhance student learning?

What effect does integration of first-person pedagogy and mindfulness training in the classroom have on intellectual conceptions in college students compared to a control group?

- increases in attention capacities among the first-person pedagogy students
- improvements in body awareness
- reduction in anxiety and depression
- increase in compassion for self and others

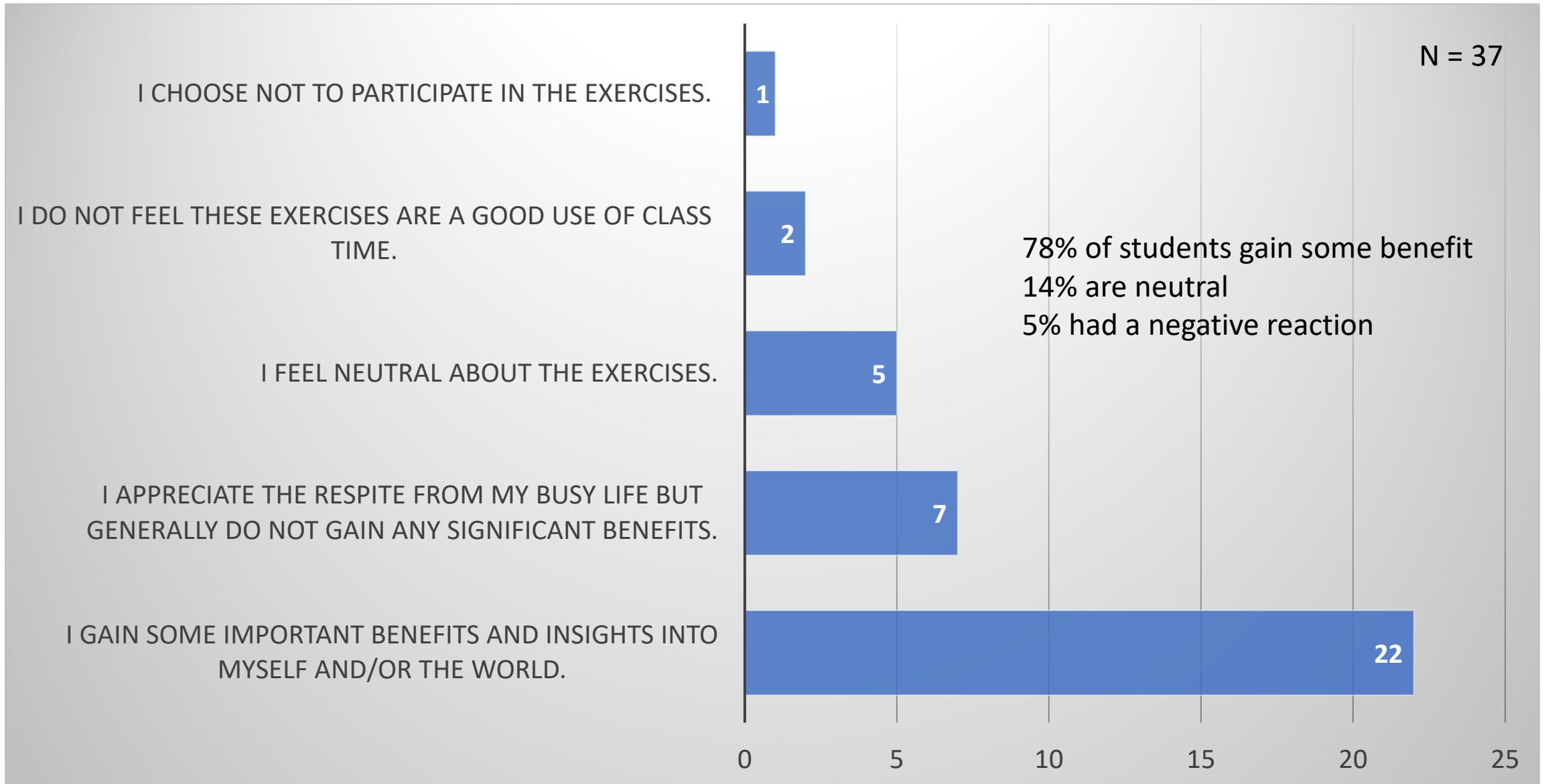
I CHOOSE NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE EXERCISES.

I DO NOT FEEL THESE EXERCISES ARE A GOOD USE OF TIME.

I FEEL NEUTRAL ABOUT THE EXERCISES.

I APPRECIATE THE RESPITE FROM MY BUSY LIFE BUT GENERALLY DO NOT GAIN ANY SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS.

I GAIN SOME IMPORTANT BENEFITS AND INSIGHTS INTO MYSELF
AND/OR THE WORLD.



Three safety measures when implementing contemplative processes

They should be voluntary.

Students to be told they can terminate the practice of it and experience becomes aversive.

The frequency kind and length of the practice should be limited.

Can
contemplative
pedagogy play a
role in my
courses?

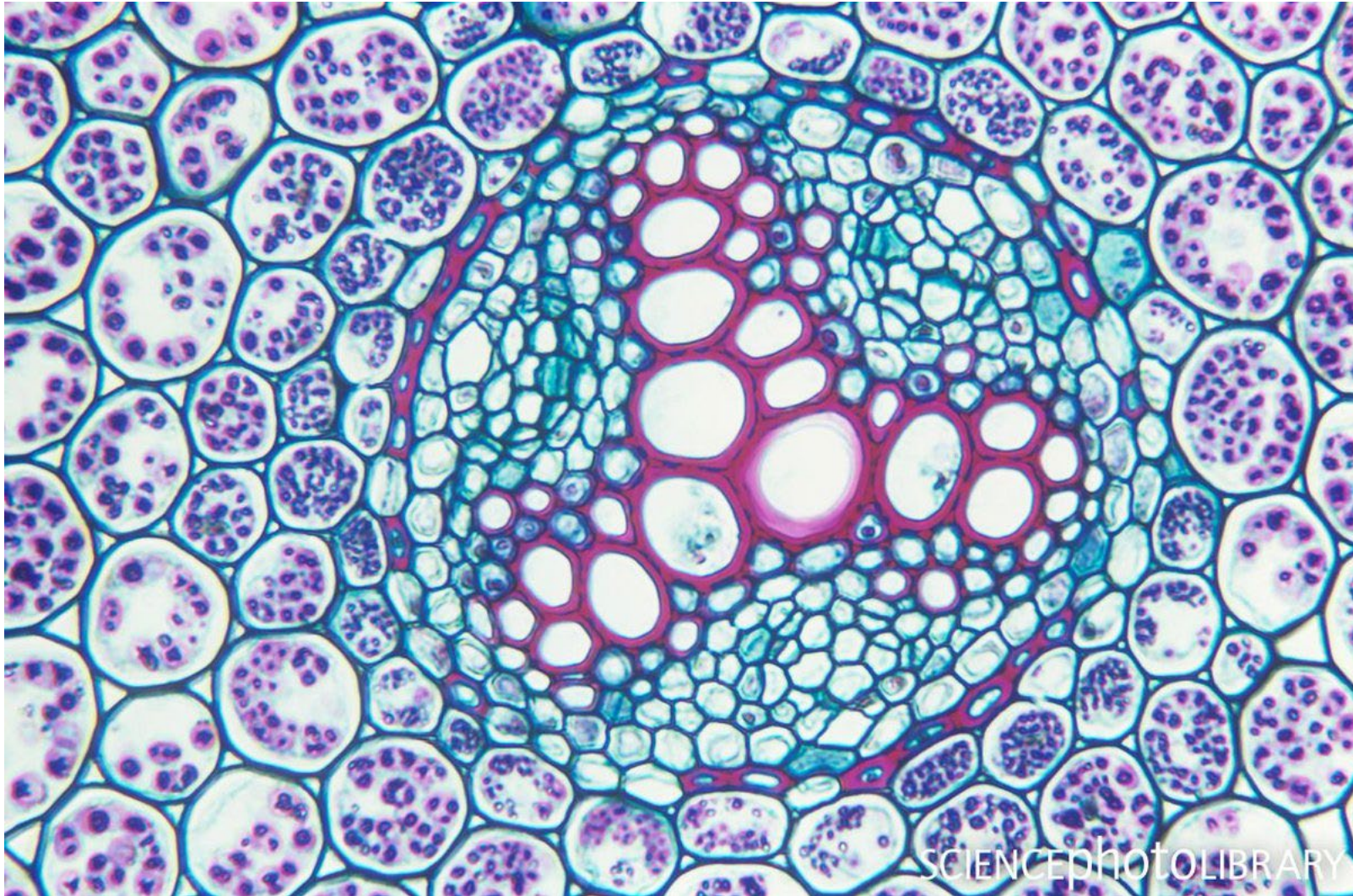
Michelle Franci

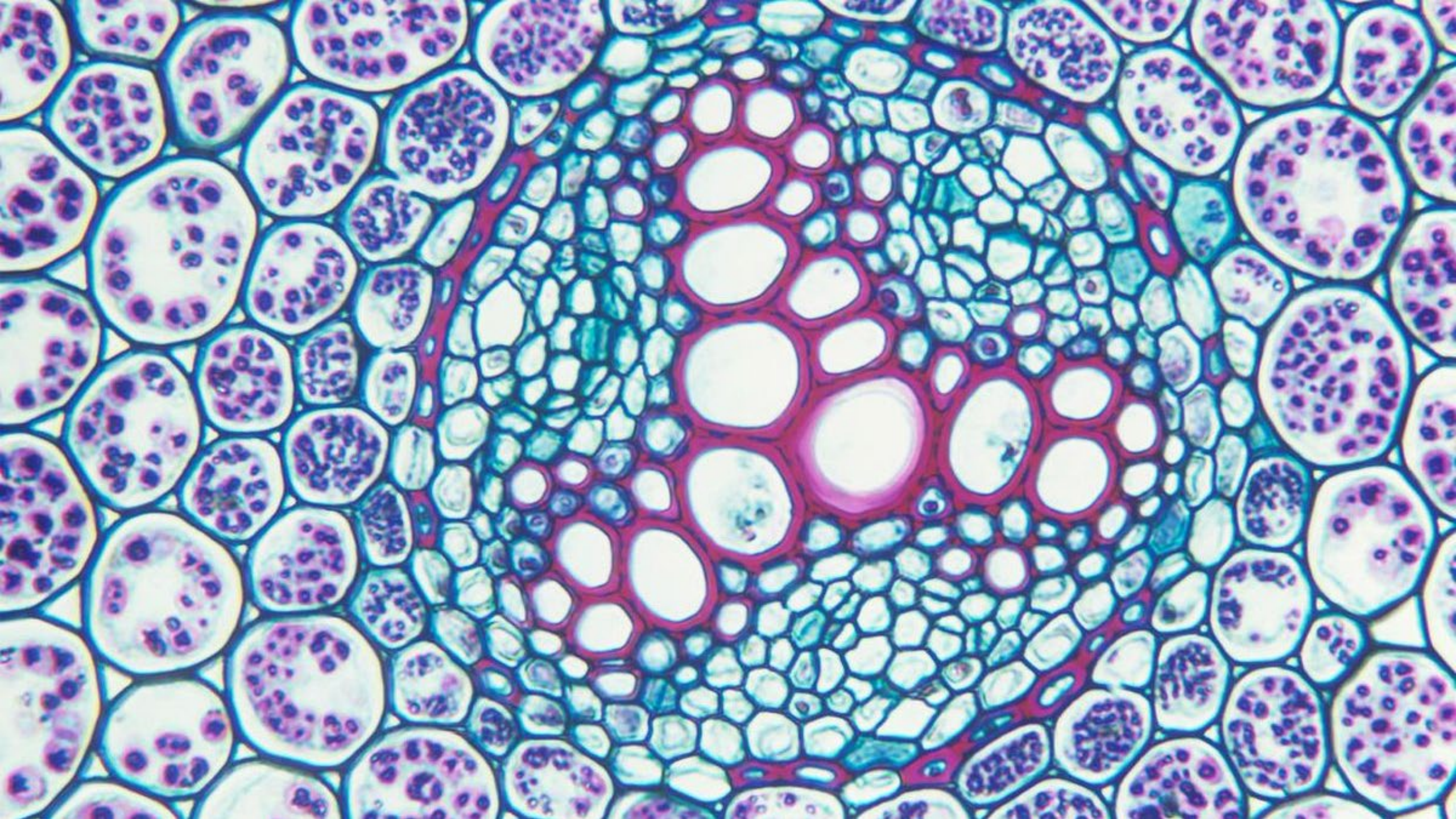
Frank B. Mallory Professor of Chemistry



<https://www.brynmawr.edu/>

Nothing is worth noting that is not seen with fresh eyes. —Matsuo Bashô





Want to learn
more about
contemplative
pedagogy?

Aims of UVM's Contemplative Faculty Learning Community with the Center for Teaching and Learning

- Train faculty how to effectively integrate contemplative teaching into existing and new courses across the curriculum.
- Foster the development of concrete models of implementation and assessment of these practices across disciplines.
- Support a deepening of personal contemplative practices by providing structure, guidance and encouragement.

<https://www.uvm.edu/ctl/programs-services/contemplative-faculty-learning-community/>

Activities – 2021-2022 Contemplative Faculty Learning Community

2021

- August – Introductory Meeting
- September – Transformation and Renewal in Higher Education
- October - Mindfulness and Introduction to Contemplative Practices + Student-Led Practice
- December - Contemplative Pedagogy in Practice

2022

- January – Saturday Mindfulness Retreat at the Interfaith Center
- February - Teacher Preparation and Classroom Challenges + Trauma-Informed Practices
- March - Current Research on Contemplative Practice
- April – Workshop – contemplative activities in our courses
- May – Final Retreat with Contemplative Course Story Share

UVM's Contemplative Faculty Learning Community



Center for Teaching & Learning

Teaching Continuity

Events

Open Hours

Blackboard

Faculty-to-Faculty Consulting Program

Programs & Services

Designing and Teaching

[Programs & Services](#) / [Contemplative Faculty Learning Community](#)

Contemplative Faculty Learning Community

The Contemplative Faculty Learning Community (CFLC) for UVM faculty seeks to develop a forum of scholars engaged in a yearlong exploration of contemplative teaching and learning and pedagogical approaches to classroom practices. Contemplative practices are applied across the disciplines in higher education and are unified by classroom activities that invite students to mindfully integrate their own rich experience into their learning experience.

We seek to create a place for UVM scholars to gather in a supportive contemplative community espousing radical care for others and ourselves. We will engage in our own contemplative practices ("inner work") while reinventing our classes to infuse contemplation and reflection into the curriculum ("outer work"). While contemplative practices vary greatly, they focus on the present experience and include a "first-person" orientation that creates opportunities for greater connection and insight.

[To apply,
fill out this form](#)

More info and to apply: <https://www.uvm.edu/ctl/programs-services/contemplative-faculty-learning-community/>

Resources for contemplative teaching and learning in higher education

Center for Teaching and Learning


- Contemplative Faculty Learning Community is accepting new applications now
- Join the CONTEMPLATIVE listserv at UVM
- Faculty consultation by request (lhill@uvm.edu)

Association of Contemplative Mind in Society (C-Mind) web resources

- <https://www.contemplativemind.org/>



“Without a context to develop the awareness of the implications of our actions and a clear idea of what is most deeply meaningful to us, we will continue to act in ways that force us into short term, myopic responses to a world increasingly out of control.” (Barbezat and Bush, 2014)

A person is shown in silhouette, sitting in a meditative pose on a light blue, misty ground. To the left is a dark, gnarled tree with a sparse canopy of dark leaves. To the right is another dark tree with a more dense, reddish canopy. The background is a dramatic sky with a gradient from dark blue at the top to a bright, hazy red and orange near the horizon. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

May you be happy
May you be free
May you be safe

College students reap benefits of meditation thanks to professor-led practice



WCAX, April 2019

Key questions about contemplative education and the scholarship of teaching and learning

Academic integrity and rigor

Assessment of learning

Classroom efficiency

Student agency

The appropriateness of affective and introspective dimensions of teaching and learning

Contemplative examples from a fully online course

- Course name: Philosophy, Religion, and the Environment
- Learning outcomes: Students will recognize that you have a “worldview” and that it is part of a particular time and tradition, and which can be challenged and enhanced by other views. As part of this exploration, students will have actively explored and reflected upon different ways of knowing, including emotional and contemplative as well as logical and intellectual approaches.

Compson, J. (2017). Cultivating the Contemplative Mind in Cyberspace: Field Notes from Pedagogical Experiments in Fully Online Classes. *J. of Contemplative Inquiry*. 4(1): 107-127



Dr. Jane Compson, Assoc Professor of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences; University of Washington

Guiding principle: Grounding

- introduce students to the rationale, relevance and importance of contemplative pedagogy with a reading -“Opening the Contemplative Mind in the Academic Classroom” Tobin Hart (2004)
- students choose a contemplative practice to try out (Tree of Contemplative Practices)
- students use the discussion board to share their experience, whether positive or negative

Guiding principle: Integration by form

Are contemplative practices interwoven with other course materials in a way that complements and reinforces the learning objectives?

Course module example:

- Reading assignment
- quiz based on reading
- “conventional” discussion assignment – respond to a prompt from the reading
- contemplative assignment with instructions and reflective writing assignment

Guiding principle: Integration by theme

3. Do contemplative exercises reflect the themes and content of the course materials?
 - contemplative exercises should weave together common motifs in the course
 - exercises should be congruent with specific themes from the assigned readings for that module

Guiding principle: Integration by process and structure

Do contemplative exercises reinforce learning objectives through reflection and meta-cognition? Do they accommodate different learning styles?

Consistency is important

- offers many opportunities for practice
- increases familiarity with contemplative activities
- reinforces learning
- builds trust in the process

Guiding principle: Integration through assessment

Are contemplative assignments assessed in ways that encourage reflective and meta-cognition, and leave room for creative expression?

- “assessment” Latin root means ‘to sit beside’ ... the value of assessment is collaborative rather than inspectorial
- Pass/fail grading system
- Make contemplative activities worth a percentage of the final grade
- Use final assessments that ask students to reflect on their learning and experience with contemplative practices throughout the course

Some guidelines for using contemplative practices in the classroom

- Explore and deepen your own personal contemplative practice
- Define the intention for the practice and share with students. How does it deepen student learning?
- Give some context to the practice (e.g., pranayama from yoga tradition)
- Evaluate contemplative activities on a pass/fail basis
- Embed practices throughout the course in a meaningful way
- Offer different options
- Provide a mix of intrapersonal (private) and interpersonal (social) activities

