Harnessing Yoga and Easy Mindfulness

Evelyn May

Ce455dr@metrostate.edu

With the semester in full swing for students, life is moving fast. You can tell the stress levels just by looking around at fellow students and faculty members. The pleasure of being with friends is sometimes overridden by our exhaustion.

"I got spoiled this summer,” said Daniel Silva, an Applied Mathematics major at Metro State. “I could go outside, hang out with friends, and exercise. But, I have a midterm Wednesday and a test Friday. All I have time for is work and study." My heart sunk, because many of us are in the same stressful situation. As we get closer to graduation, school just gets more difficult.

As a student, I feel overwhelmed and overworked. Like many students, I am annoyed when I'm graded down for stupid typos and have to learn things I know I'll never use again (sorry, but I'll never use website coding). Oddly enough, as a yoga instructor I love the challenge to practice mindfulness and positivity.

According to Jama Internal Medicine, 47 trial studies where meditation was used to relieve stress had stunning findings. According to the study, mindfulness and meditation can moderately improve psychological stressors like anxiety, depression and pain.

I encourage you to try out some one-minute meditations to reduce stress and center your focus.

**Taste the Mindfulness**

Get yourself a piece of candy, something that melts like a chocolate is the best. You can do this meditation anywhere. Make sure you are seated and comfortable. You are going to inspect the candy before unwrapping it. Feel the texture of the wrapper and notice any small details on the wrapper, even see if it has a smell with the wrapper on. When you are ready, unwrap the candy and look, smell and feel the texture before placing it in our mouth.

Next, place the candy on your tongue and close your eyes. Take a moment to feel the texture of the candy in your mouth as it melts. Search for the flavors and, as you notice them, think about where they are hitting your tongue. Notice if the taste changes when you breathe. This exercise works great for a short break when studying.

**Chant a Mantra**

In yoga, the mantra “Om Shanti Shanti” is popular. Om is the cosmic sound and shanti represents peace. You deserve to be happy, focused and loved. It is okay to repeat a mantra to yourself in times of stress. For me, it is simply repeating "I can do this" while sitting in a classroom. Find what you need, it could be repeating "you got this" during a test. Just stay positive and repeat those positive thoughts.

**Breathe**

Yoga is breath. Essentially, that is all it is. If you pay attention to your breath, you are doing yoga. If you need help focusing or feel overwhelmed, take a moment and notice how you’re breathing. One way to find out if you’re breathing deeply is to put one hand on your belly and one on your chest. Close your eyes and take a moment to feel yourself breathe. Feel the air come in your nose and mouth, slowly down into your lungs. The air you take in should lift your chest and then your belly. With deep breaths your hands will move. Do not hyperventilate, just breathe deeply with your eyes closed. This will help you find that the most basic thing for life is sometimes lost with stress. Slow down and feel yourself inhale and exhale.

You are not your grades. I've heard this said by many professors here at Metro. They are right. Unless you make a big deal about your grades (don't be that person), no one knows. You will still live the same life if you get a B or C every once and awhile.

Love yourself and others for not being perfect. We learn through mistakes, through messy situations, and uncomfortable moments. Each semester is full of learning moments. Just breathe deep and you'll get through it.