



QUOTES AND SAYINGS: A CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE

"There's a power in words. There's a power in being able to explain and describe and articulate what you know and feel and believe about the world, and about yourself."

—Tracy Chapman

OVERVIEW

Engage in a mindfulness practice, reflect on a quote, and share insights about how the quote relates to your life and work.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- During a staff or grade-level team meeting, especially when stress levels are high
- For staff professional development (especially at the beginning of the year to remind them of why they are doing this work)
- For individual reflection

TIME REQUIRED

- 15-20 minutes

LEVEL

- College
- Adult

MATERIALS

- A quote (or selection of [quotes](#))

- A timer

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Staff members or college students will:
- Strengthen self-awareness and social awareness by contemplating identity and culture
- Use reflective practice to gain insight

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Prior to leading this activity with a group, take a few minutes to read and reflect on a quote. How did you feel as you took time to reflect on this quote? Did any insights emerge for you?

INSTRUCTIONS

PREPARING FOR THIS PRACTICE

- Begin to collect quotes or sayings related to topics of [human significance](#) and [social justice](#).
- Keep them written on index cards in a box or file to use during this contemplation practice.
- Choose quotes or sayings that reflect a wide range of [cultures](#) and identities.

THE PRACTICE

- If leading a group, begin by inviting participants to find a comfortable place to sit on the floor, or on a chair. Then introduce the practice:
 - *For this activity, we are going to use a quote [choose your own or provide a range of quotes to participants] by [Arundhati Roy](#), from her novel, *The God of Small Things*: "Change is one thing. Acceptance is another."*
- Invite group members to set an "intention" for this practice.
 - *An intention directs your attention and energy to an outcome. The outcome is typically a disposition, virtue, or state of being.*
 - *Sometimes we connect an intention to a particular problem we want to solve, such as thinking about how to resolve a conflict with a boss or colleague.*
 - *An intention of this nature would take the form of a statement such as: Using Insight in order to better understand how to handle _____.*
- Repeat the quote or saying out loud several times.

- Engage in a brief mindfulness practice. (Set the timer for 5-7 min.)
 - *Sit in a comfortable position. It can be on the floor, a chair, or pillow. Most people cross their legs.*
 - *Let your hands fall to your knees and rest them there gently, palms up.*
 - *Alternatively, you can hold your hands together and rest them in the center of your lap. Some people like touching the tips of their fingers together creating a triangle or another shape.*
 - *Breathe deeply thinking about the air flowing in and out of your nostrils. Fill up your lungs completely before exhaling.*
 - *After taking a few deep breaths, breathe naturally again, keeping your attention on the feeling of air moving throughout your body.*
 - *When a thought enters your mind, distracting you from your breath, gently tell it to move on. If the thought feels urgent, tell it that you will go back to it later.*
 - *Once you experience a greater sense of calm, repeat the quote to yourself a few times; then stop.*
 - *Be gentle. Clearing the space in your mind and focusing on one thing takes practice*
 - *When the timer goes off, open your eyes.*

RESPONDING TO THE PRACTICE

- Respond to the following questions in writing:
 - What does this quote mean to you?
 - How does it apply to your practice?
 - What questions do you have now?

CLOSURE: DEBRIEFING THE PROCESS

- Reflect on the following questions individually or with a partner:
 - What was your perception of the passing of time? Did it feel long or did time pass quickly?
 - What kind of thoughts, feelings, images were occupying your mind?
 - In what ways was this experience surprising or challenging?

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

How did you and/or group participants respond to this exercise? Did it deepen self- or social awareness? How do you know?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

In a study of university students who took a course featuring [contemplative pedagogy](#), participants who used contemplative reading practices reported gaining deeper insight into themselves and the content.

Further, a growing body of research suggests that teachers are experiencing [positive outcomes](#) from practicing mindfulness. Teachers who practice mindfulness may experience [greater well-being](#), [awareness](#), [focused attention](#), and [resilience](#).

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Working in the field of education is one of the most inherently meaningful forms of work we can do. In fact, many people choose this field because they want to make a difference in the lives of children and in the world in general. Yet, this sense of meaning can be lost in the daily stressors of the classroom or the educational system itself.

When educators take time to slow down and reflect on their values and the meaning behind their work, their well-being may increase and they may be more likely to foster a greater sense of trust and purpose, together.

SOURCE

Adapted from [*Mindful Practice for Social Justice: A Guide for Educators and Professional Learning Communities*](#) by Raquel Ríos, Copyright © 2019 Taylor & Francis, Used with Permission