

Joining Hearts and Minds: A Contemplative Approach to Holistic Education in Psychology

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Decades ago, Ashley Montagu told us that “Education should be the nourishing and causing to grow and develop of the capacity for humanity. And by humanity I mean the ability to relate oneself in a loving, creatively enlarging manner to all other human beings and oneself” (Montagu, 1962). Years of teaching at a contemplative institution reveal that Montagu’s highest aims for education are well served by contemplative education, the central topic of this presentation.

Contemplative education includes the same four components found in other educational systems: learning theory, curriculum, pedagogy, and learning assessment. Starting with a contemplative theory about learning, Naropa University’s robust curriculum provokes learners to know themselves and the world they inhabit. Through personal example (modeling) and numerous other pedagogical methods, the teaching provided by contemplative faculty provokes deeply transformative learning in our students. Procedures used to ascertain student learning and provide feedback help to ensure that contemplative learning occurs. This talk addresses each of these components within Naropa’s uniquely contemplative approach to holistic education.

Founded in 1974, Naropa University has gradually grown to about 1200 full-time, degree-seeking students in bachelors and masters programs in psychology, writing, environmental studies, religious studies, and the arts. Today we will focus on psychology majors, currently over 100 students.

Naropa has provided leadership in contemplative education for over thirty years. Contemplative education challenges and supports students in ways that greatly expand upon traditional academic approaches. Education at Naropa University originated from a Tibetan Buddhist education system founded in the training of mental skills involving mindfulness and awareness. This innovative form of education equips students with perspectives and techniques useful for bringing forth their own genuine way of connecting their heart and mind. Inevitably, contemplative education brings students’ inherent compassion and wisdom into the light of day, training them to be confident and creative leaders.

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Blessed with religious roots, Naropa University has grown into a robustly secular and pluralistic institution that for decades has emphasized spirituality by mixing Buddhist inspiration with other approaches, ranging across religions and non-religious approaches as well. Naropa is an institution rooted in world wisdom traditions that teach meditation, prayer, and other contemplative practices. Pluralism amongst spiritual and religious paths is highly valued in the Naropa community (including students, staff, and faculty). We have committed to the process of deep, personal work with each other in diversity, as reflected in having recently instituted the position of Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs for Diversity and Assessment, and in now requiring six credits of diversity training for all undergraduate students. In a transformational learning process, our students work to move beyond a limited concept of who they are and what they can do. As a natural consequence of this fundamental shift toward recognizing greater potential (*open awareness*), Naropa graduates work successfully to change the world in positive directions.

We want to be sure you know what we mean by a few key terms. *Spiritual* concerns the experience of vitality, life force, divinity, sacredness, and so on. *Contemplative* concerns a person's reflective approach to his or her experience. This can involve intention, attention, attitudes, etc. The two are related in that spiritual experience is facilitated by engaging in a contemplative activity or adopting a contemplative attitude. Relatively speaking, it's even more difficult to explain "open awareness," a phrase we coined to refer to something that people experience. Open awareness can be experienced directly, but is rather tricky to talk about. In fact, before defining open awareness for you, we must invoke an important caveat. For any concept that we use to trace actual lived experience, it would be a mistake to think that the referential concept is the same thing as the experience itself. That would be analogous to thinking that when somebody uses her finger to point something out to us, all we need do is look at her finger to find out what we need to know. An ancient Buddhist teaching makes this point in terms of a finger pointing to the moon, and Western culture has offered this same insight in the slogan "The map is not the territory." Please take in and heed this caveat. With that distinction in mind, here comes the packaged concept that we can use to refer to the experience which itself may be ineffable. Open awareness has the quality of being wakeful and alert, highly cognizant without necessarily any hint of the anxiety or being on edge that so often accompanies vigilance; it is a thorough resting that can be calm, relaxed, quiet, even serene; and it is imbued with a sense of opening or expansiveness that has the capacity to extend beyond any boundary or limitation. Open awareness is entirely compatible with a stable sense of clear contact with the physical world and embodied presence in the here and now, unadulterated by machinations of thought.

This presentation concerns the processes by which a student comes to learn and embody open awareness, and through which this awareness is brought to academic pursuits and life in general. We address these ways of learning by presenting relevant theory, practical implementation, and data regarding outcomes. There are two of us here today from Naropa. First, you will hear from Peter Grossenbacher about the view and practice of contemplative education in our Department of Contemplative Psychology. Next, you will hear from Steven Parkin regarding outcomes of contemplative education that we have extracted from an ongoing empirical study of the experience and effects of meditation.

Components of Contemplative Education

Contemplative education has the same four components as other educational systems: learning theory, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. An emphasis on open awareness distinguishes the contemplative approach to holistic education from other alternatives. We speak from a perspective in which open awareness is not segregated as a separate component, but rather suffuses all parts of the educational system.

Contemplative Learning Theory

Let's start with a theory of learning based on contemplative tradition. Here is a contemplative learning model, inspired by a Buddhist approach to learning that identifies a four-phase learning sequence comprised of study, contemplation, meditation, and action. In this model, the various phases are interconnected and overlapping, so there is not a sharp distinction between one phase and next. Study involves receiving and storing information such as by reading or lecture. Contemplation consists of careful consideration of this information, for example, evaluation from one or more points of view, thereby leading to possible integration of the material with previously acquired knowledge. Meditation enables an even deeper understanding by relaxing the effort of study and contemplation, and allowing the topic of learning to resonate through levels of processing that lie beyond conscious control. Community-based action, the final phase, applies previous learning beyond the halls of academe by engaging with a larger community. This four-phase model is ideally suited for whole-person learning environments that take an inclusive approach to understanding our humanity.

Study is the first phase of contemplative learning. It consists of exposure to and ingestion of something not already known. By receiving information, the student is given the raw material needed for assembling, or reconstructing, a conceptual framework in which to think about the topic. In terms of the learning model, study involves the encoding and storage of information, including cognitive processes such as association with previous learning. The study phase should be easily recognizable because it appears universal to higher education. It remains an open question as to how learners in a contemplative learning environment may study in ways that are not common in other settings. At an idealized level, we might say that material has been exhaustively studied only when it has been both memorized and meaningfully interpreted.

The second phase of contemplative learning, contemplation, involves deeply mulling over the subject at hand. This contemplation takes a variety of forms. One natural way to deepen one's engagement with a topic is to make it personal. For example, in a course that I teach on Personality Theories, one of the theorists we cover is Rollo May, who approaches human individuality from the perspective of existentialism. To drive home the seriousness of the aptly named "existential crisis" that awaits each of us, I lead the students through a guided contemplation in which we starkly encounter the potentially paralyzing angst that comes from considering one's own mortality, the unsurpassed importance of every act and decision that a person makes, and the utter and daunting freedom that offers no guidance to the choices we make.

Education can help learners to accommodate perspectives other than their own, and may even lead to skillful navigation among different points of view. Taking one's own beliefs with a grain of salt is not a new idea; Robert Thouless offered this over seventy years ago: "The ability to adopt the attitude of partial belief or to hold propositions with less than full certainty is rare, and its acquirement should be one of the aims of a liberal education." (Thouless, 1935). A more modern phrasing of this idea on a bumper sticker is "Don't believe everything you think!" For many of us, the process of adopting one perspective after another can be laborious and slow. Contemplation provides a designated form for perspective taking, and does so by leveraging the mind's natural tendency to shift. Even without explicit instruction to consider disparate perspectives, shifting among perspectives seems to naturally happen on its own within the context of contemplative learning. By virtue of perspective taking and rational analysis, contemplation often yields greater conceptual understanding of the studied topic, as well as making a personal relationship with the topic.

As the third phase in this learning model, meditation brings greater awareness to the process of encountering a topic. You may know something of the popular and scientific interest in meditation that has been growing in recent years. Meditation training is a form of experiential learning involving personal instruction. The traditions of meditation taught at Naropa University primarily involve processes of attending that concern sustaining attention with clarity. By resting

in an upright posture and focusing attention for a period of minutes, the mind can relax. When mental relaxation is combined with sustained attention, awareness becomes less obstructed. The practice of combining relaxation and awareness leads to an extensive range of experiences. Many classes begin with a few minutes of meditation, which allows students to arrive mentally as well as physically within the classroom.

With extended meditation practice, a person's unthinking tendency always to be thinking and imagining becomes transformed into a more purposeful alternation between intentionally thinking, and taking a relaxing break from thinking. Several outcomes of contemplative learning depend on this third phase. First, by sequentially combining intellectual study and contemplation with selfless awareness, contemplative learning trains the student to access open awareness in ways that are compatible with thoughtful concerns. Ironically, it is by de-emphasizing the perspective of one's own self concept and by letting go of the need to control so stringently one's mental life, that this selfless approach makes room for *all* of the student's capacities to come into play. This deep mixing with open awareness leads to insight and realization. In this deepest phase of contemplative learning, the student transforms. The person's way of being in the world changes by now embodying the full extent of a teaching. In this way, contemplative learning does not stop with what a person knows. It actually impacts how a person manifests in the world. Though difficult to speak about in a concise manner, the words "being" and "becoming" come close to encapsulating this important facet of transformative learning.

The fourth phase of learning, community-based action (akin to service learning), brings students into real contact with a community outside the college setting. This recent curricular innovation in Western institutions parallels a many-centuries-old tradition of compassionate action that can be found, for example, in engaged Buddhism. The utility of activity for furthering one's learning may be widely recognized. From the scientific perspective of neurobiology, this can be understood as yet one more instance of the general rule that the more ways that a learner works with material, the more facets become known, and the more interconnections are made. In short, actively doing and pushing past one's limits makes for more complete learning. From the perspective of holistic education, it is of further importance that action contributes to compassionate service and developing community.

Contemplative Curriculum and Co-curriculum

The four-phase contemplative learning model provides the central organizing principle for our curriculum in the Contemplative Psychology Department at Naropa University. Today we focus on the most critical parts of the major that culminates in a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Contemplative Psychology. In their first semester, psychology majors take the first course of a four-semester sequence which trains them in study, contemplation, and meditation. Rather than allocating only one phase per semester, throughout each course students learn via the first three phases, even in their very first course. Subsequent courses build on this foundation by deepening and extending each of these three phases. The fourth course requires students to volunteer for forty hours outside the university. These students are placed in a setting which allows them to practice basic attendance with people who are dying, or quite elderly, or in some sort of a circumstance in which they cannot fully cope on their own. The students then meet with an instructor weekly for supervision, and discuss their observations and experiences.

In addition to this required course sequence that trains students in contemplative modes of inquiry, a variety of other courses build on the foundation of contemplative training just described. These courses are designed to mix open awareness with scholarly training in traditional academic disciplines and fields. Courses that mix such distinct modes of inquiry include: Perceptual Science, Social Psychology, Personality Theories, and a Research Practicum into Conscious Experience.

Some of Naropa's curricular and co-curricular opportunities promote a strong sense of community for its undergraduate students. Naropa University requires all first-year students to participate in a two-semester seminar with the same cohort of fellow students. Also, no undergraduate classes are scheduled on Wednesdays between noon and 1:30 PM, providing weekly times reserved for fostering community at institutional and departmental levels. To build community further, the Contemplative Psychology Department offers a course comprised of an annual two-day contemplative retreat in the Colorado Rocky Mountains. All psychology majors participate in this retreat twice over two years. In their final year, a required two-semester senior project course maintains the same cohort of learners in a group process that fosters taking creative risks. This combination of year-long, weekend, and lunch-hour activities helps to deepen community by encouraging peer support among all students.

Contemplative Pedagogy

Operating within the curricular framework described above, and grounded in the principles of contemplative learning theory, teaching in the contemplative classroom requires preparation and skills that appear rather rarely in most institutions. We have identified several critically important steps for contemplative pedagogy. First, the instructor should be pursuing a personal path of contemplative development in order to ensure access to open awareness. When interacting with students, the instructor needs to be as genuine and authentic as possible. Otherwise students receive mixed messages between that which is stated and that which goes unstated. It helps for the instructor to take advantage of opportunities for spontaneity, enriching the planned lesson by effectively leveraging teachable moments. In our approach to contemplative education, students are put in the position of testing whatever they can against their own experience as a means for validating that which they are learning. Finally, contemplative teaching uses a variety of techniques first to contrast and then ultimately to integrate conceptual ideation with nonconceptual experience. Since these techniques are all experiential in nature, it is not easy to communicate clearly about them using words alone. Suffice it to say that, one way or another, it is vitally important for the student to disengage from the thinking process. This creates the space needed for contemplative learning to occur.

By way of example, we teach a course on the psychology of perception. This course brings together several distinct modes of inquiry, ranging from the psychological science of sensory systems, to expressive writing that gives voice to each student's nuanced experience of sensations in vision, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and bodily senses. We also include a contemplative approach to learning about perception by letting our awareness rest in the ever-present swarm of sounds, sights, and other sensations that are available in each moment.

For anyone who wishes to conduct this exercise, please close your eyes. Arrange your body posture so that your head and shoulders feel upright, and your torso is relaxed. Place your attention lightly on your breath. {PAUSE} If your mind wanders, simply come back to feeling your breath. {PAUSE} Without having to describe or explain anything, do your best to notice how that feels. Try to appreciate the qualities of your experience when you focus on breathing. {PAUSE} Very well, you may open your eyes now.

For some of you, this brief exercise may have offered a glimpse of nonconceptual experience. Of the many benefits of contemplative education, one outcome is embodiment, being fully present here and now. As you may observe, this includes sensations, thoughts, emotions, and everything.

Contemplative Learning Assessment

Teachers have an opportunity to recognize and give encouraging feedback about growing inclusivity of thought, opening of awareness, precision, authenticity, and creativity. Indicators of

cognitive inclusivity in a student's work include the variety of content, breadth of perspectives already evident, and readiness to engage with additional alternative perspectives. Indicators of open awareness include engagement with the present moment, connection with others who are present, and sensitivity to others who are not present. Through written and oral communication with students, the instructor can explicitly invite greater inclusivity and awareness. For example, feedback on returned papers can address students' lived experience as well as issues of content and language use. This can take the form of questions written in the margin that inquire into the student's personal response. Written examinations likewise can include one or more exam questions that direct the student toward wider consideration of a topic.

Oral examination offers a format ideally suited for invoking present-moment awareness. Many Naropa instructors use the "warrior exam," a contemplative oral examination format in which students take turns being put on the spot in the center of a circle to answer a question orally. An accompanying handout (included in these proceedings as an appendix) explains more of the philosophical and mechanical aspects of this examination format. The sense of warriorship here refers to the willingness of students to face courageously and nonaggressively whatever fear may arise when challenged to speak authentically to a group. By speaking one's best thoughts in the presence of others, examinees develop a genuine confidence in themselves. Students in the surrounding circle also benefit from contemplating the answering student's response. A major benefit of this type of exam is that all students in the surrounding circle can hear the answer provided by the student being tested, perhaps coming to appreciate the unique expression of their classmates. To take this exam effectively, the student must have some degree of integration of the material to be able to speak about it accurately, comprehensively, and personally. Contemplative precision is not simple-minded adherence to some preformulated agenda, but rather involves a delicate balance between structure and not knowing. This test facilitates spontaneous expression of knowledge, and provides immediate feedback regarding the student's preparedness and depth of understanding.

Benefits of Contemplative Education

Contemplative learning calls for deep engagement with the topic of study, with the learner's own interiority, and with the wider world. A contemplative curriculum is constituted by a system of courses that offer personal connection, multiple modes of inquiry, and opportunities for integration among different ways of knowing. Contemplative teaching depends on teachers who are pursuing their own path of contemplative development in order to provide authentic interpersonal interaction, spontaneous insight, and skillful exploration of both conceptual and nonconceptual intelligence. The assessment of contemplative learning must likewise address the wide range of experience that develops with contemplative practice. This is an important point: awareness training opens us to the totality of our experience, which leads to further ramifications. One is equanimity, wherein the learner no longer is so readily convinced by his own personal response or default attitudes. Equanimity makes it possible to accommodate more extremes in one's own experience without having to pursue some distraction or entertainment. For example, when faced with the loss of a dying friend, many feelings and thoughts arise, from the pain of her no longer being in the world, to a sense of beauty in celebrating her total being. If contemplative education does not actually impact how a person experiences matters of life and death, then the education falls short of its potential. What does it matter that students benefit from a contemplative education infused with experiences of open awareness? How far does the net impact of this actually reach? To the extent that students embody, realize, or manifest a depth of feeling and awareness, then this whole-hearted openness to experience has the potential to impact everyone with whom they interact over the course of their entire lives. It seems difficult to imagine anything more worthwhile or effective toward the aim of making this world a better place.

Empirically Assessed Outcomes of Contemplative Education

Naropa's Consciousness Laboratory is a training and research facility that blends contemplative perspectives with psychology to improve scientific understanding of human capacities for awareness. Researchers in this laboratory conduct programmatic study of meditation experience and contemplative spirituality. As Consciousness Lab researchers, we take seriously the notion that people have tremendous capacity for positive qualities such as open awareness, compassion, and skill in creating harmony within and among ourselves. These capacities are cultivated through intention and conscious awareness (Grossenbacher & Muzer, in preparation). By exploring the experiences of contemplative practitioners, we can come to understand the processes by which those engaged in contemplative practices and teachings develop emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually. The training of attention and awareness, for example, are components of contemplative practice that can be explored by psychological science, and which have important implications for development.

We use the methods, concepts, and language of psychological science to explore empirically the experience of contemplative practitioners, whether they are just beginning or are decades into their practice. This work has involved creating questionnaires, using these to collect data, and analyzing the resulting verbal reports through content analysis. In particular, we share with you some results of questionnaire studies that were designed to find out what people do when they meditate, and what effect that has on their lives. This research was conducted by graduate and undergraduate students in collaboration with the Laboratory Director, Dr. Peter Grossenbacher. We work from a sample of convenience of Naropa University students who meditate, and operationalized meditation as answering "Yes" to the question "Have you ever meditated?" Though the resulting data were not originally collected for the purpose of assessing the outcomes of education at Naropa University, we infer that participants' responses pertain to these students' contemplative education, in that both meditation training per se, as well as utilization of open awareness throughout a wide variety of courses, are integral parts of the Naropa education. This study has not controlled for students who may have started meditating prior to attending Naropa, and lacks any comparison group, such as students at another college not engaged in contemplative education.

Outcomes Study Procedure

Dozens of responses from an initial questionnaire provide the basis for developing our current generation of questionnaires. Each component of the current Naropa University Meditation Questionnaire Battery focuses on a particular aspect of meditation, including participant's history of meditation, experiences while meditating, and the effects of meditation. In this report we omit data from other participants in order to focus on Naropa University students' responses to two questionnaires. Eight students completed a questionnaire containing 164 items on experiences while meditating, and six completed a questionnaire containing 137 items on the effects of meditation. Each questionnaire took from 45 minutes to two hours for participants to complete. Many items in both questionnaires were designed to be ambiguous in order to elicit responses that reveal how each participant interprets the question. Participants were instructed to write "private" if they preferred not to reveal information in response to any item.

This study is primarily a qualitative analysis of verbal response data from the questionnaires. When analyzing content meaning, we identified themes evident in the responses. We grouped similar themes into the same content category, and tallied the total number of responses in each category. We tended to be generous with the number of categories derived from the data, guarding against the possibility of lumping different meanings into the same category. With regard to a simple quantitative analysis, the counts we report are the total number

of responses that share a clearly identifiable meaning. A given participant's response may contribute to more than one response category. In most cases, the selected data are presented as a set of responses to the same item.

Outcomes Study Results and Conclusions

Meditation Affects Awareness Content and Frame

Glimpses of awareness happen to all of us at various times. Contemplative practices such as meditation involve recognizing these glimpses, inviting them, and working with them. Learning experiences that could occur during meditation or other times include insights about oneself, others, and the world at large. Not surprisingly, noticing more content in the stream of consciousness as it wells up can lead to gaining greater understanding of how one's mind works. Thus, awareness plays a pivotal role in contemplative development.

We want to contrast for you two aspects of awareness. One of the important insights provided by contemplative education has to do with noticing both what you are aware of, and the manner in which you are experiencing. The content of awareness refers to the beliefs, thoughts, emotions, and sensations that could otherwise go unnoticed. The frame of awareness is the experiential surround in which any particular content of awareness occurs (Grossenbacher, 2001).

Our questionnaires asked the following questions of each participant:

"Has your awareness changed since beginning to meditate?"

"Please describe changes in awareness, if any, that may have been due to meditation."

It was nearly universal for students' life experience to be impacted by meditation, affecting both the content of awareness and the framing of awareness. The following quotes provide representative responses regarding students' meditative experience and the effects of meditation:

"Greater awareness of the space around me."

"More aware of the world... everyday things outside of myself."

"Awareness varies from feeling personal to NOT personal."

Six of six Naropa students indicated that meditation affected their awareness, and their accounts detailed several distinct effects, all including some kind of increase in awareness. More specifically, four responses indicated greater awareness of bodily experience, three mentioned the environment and surroundings, two mentioned thoughts, two feelings, one other people, and one increased awareness of one's own needs. From these data we conclude that a strong sense of embodiment is prevalent among contemplative students, that awareness increases in other respects more generally, and that changes in the framing of awareness are noticed. We suggest that meditation training affects both the content of awareness and frame of awareness in mutually reinforcing ways. In particular, as the sheer volume of thoughts diminishes, attention can go to noticing greater subtlety and interconnectedness throughout one's conceptual, emotional, and sensory experience. This interplay between reduced mental discursiveness and increased awareness may facilitate further relaxation, increase one's availability to experience, and add clarity to the use of rational thought and other mental faculties.

Meditation Affects Attention

Awareness is entirely experiential, and is governed by the psychological processes of attention. Questions not yet fully answered by science include how attention can be trained to sustain for longer periods, and how specific training techniques transfer to the rest of one's life. Investigating the processes and techniques by which attention is strengthened has implications for

our educational system (Burggraf & Grossenbacher, submitted), and for understanding how attentional capacities impact our general quality of life. Since William James, psychology has long known that attention to a particular object facilitates greater discernment of the details of that object. Placing attention on the breath, sensations of the body, or even an external object, as is done in some forms of meditation taught at Naropa, opens the practitioner to nuance in their experience that goes beyond the seemingly simple technique. This becomes the basis for further exploration, self-understanding, development of awareness, and transformation.

Participant self-reports provide a useful glimpse into meditation practitioners' minds, such as how attention has changed over time, and how this change affects other aspects of experience, such as emotional reactivity and communication skills. One item asked participants to describe their experience of paying attention while meditating. The following content categories were reported among eight participants: attention varies over time, attending involves returning, attentional abilities improve (such as less effort required for attending), attention returns to the intended object of attention more frequently, and attention is sustained for longer periods of time.

The following quotes describe several effects of meditation on attention:

“Attention is becoming more natural, more effortless.”

“Surprised by my capacity to pay or return to attention.”

“Attention is like a muscle to be developed and strengthened.”

“More & more through a disciplined (regular) practice, I am able to maintain longer durations of attentive focus.”

Just as awareness is pivotal to contemplative education, so too attention is pivotal to conscious awareness. Because meditation training improves attention, it plays an irreplaceable role in contemplative education. Some of the most compelling data relate students' meditation experiences to their experience when not meditating. For example, one student states, “Information, Knowledge, Wisdom or feeling-states that I have tapped into or received or experienced during meditation can be available for me to utilize and/or integrate into my daily life.” It turns out that experiences during meditation become accessible in other circumstances. We conclude that meditation develops inner resources for maintaining open awareness when engaged in daily life. The key is that meditators draw on their own inner capacities that have been cultivated during periods of time intentionally set aside for contemplative practice, an important means by which contemplative education produces lasting effects on students so as to equip them for effective action in the world.

Meditation Affects Worldview

Five questions asked students if meditation has had an effect on their self-understanding, values, or understanding of reality, and if so, to describe those effects. We discuss responses to these questions together because they are each an important aspect of students' worldview, their general orientation to the world.

Six of six students affirmed that meditation has affected their understanding of reality. Two participants reported that meditation affects the quality of their presence in the world, that being present to and honest about one's life facilitates greater fulfillment and participation. One participant reported having a more nuanced experience of reality.

Five of six students affirmed that meditation has affected their self-understanding. One participant reported having greater awareness of mental activity. Another indicated personal responsibility for how thoughts affect life, saying “[thoughts have] whatever weight we assign them.” Another explained that one of the most valuable meditation experiences is the “realization that things are the way they are and only my thoughts make them good or bad.” Another student

states, "I see more how my mind works, how it filters my experience; I understand my underlying motivations more . . . I know so many more subtleties about my psychological make-up."

When asked directly if meditation has affected their values, only two of six students said yes, which could be interpreted as meditation having relatively little effect on student's values. Another possibility, and one we lean toward, is that values are powerfully influenced by meditation, but that direct questioning about values is not a successful method of assessment. Also, based on our own experience at Naropa, the word "value" is not common parlance among undergraduate students and so may not evoke in-depth responses from them.

The two participants who did affirm that meditation has affected their values had interesting descriptions of their experience. One student expressed the value of being skillful with emotions, noting that it is neither appropriate nor possible to deal fully with troubling emotions until a later time. The other student explained that meditation led them to reconsider their commitment to moral relativity, calling it into question after having previously adopted that as their philosophical stance.

Meditation Affects Communication Skills

As described earlier, the fourth phase of our contemplative learning model is community-based learning. This extension beyond the college environment provides students with opportunities for applying the knowledge and open awareness developed throughout their contemplative education. Students' communication skills are one indicator of their development and maturity. Our data indicate how meditation affects students' communication with others.

Five of six participants reported that meditation has affected their communication with others. The participants described a greater ease and receptivity to others. One reported being less preoccupied with thinking, and therefore better able to listen to others, saying, "I used to dominate conversations, or not talk at all. I'm now at ease with people enough to listen and respond while having patience with myself." Others reported being receptive to what is being communicated, to the emotional needs of others, and to the emotional needs of themselves in an interaction.

An interesting question arising from these findings is how a solitary practice of meditation could facilitate better communication with others. It appears that open awareness, as cultivated in meditation, is further applicable to other life circumstances. Required courses that use community based pedagogy leverage communication skills for the sake of genuine service to others. For an elderly person facing the final stage of life, or anybody else in need, what could be more beneficial than heart-felt, genuine communication with another person?

Transformational Outcomes of Cultivating Awareness

Through meditating, students come to recognize and embody open awareness. Bodily experience becomes heightened and more subtle, encompassing a greater number and variety of sensations, which grounds the learner in the present moment, providing greater sensitivity, empathy, and unimpeded expression while interacting with others. Students become more attuned to and skillful with their emotional life, thoughts, and attentional capacities. These effects of open awareness have a lasting impact on the meditator's life, and are important for producing the outcomes of contemplative education. Experiences during meditation provide one source of potential lessons that can help shape students' worldview. So too, the world of experience that opens to meditators by virtue of their meditative training, a world that extends throughout one's (waking and dreaming) life, includes experiences involving awareness in ways that can contribute to shifts in understanding and motivation.

This presentation has introduced the unique pedagogical environment that shapes the Contemplative Psychology Department at Naropa University. Across a dozen academic

departments, the Naropa faculty teach contemplative practices that train attention and awareness. As teachers, we find that the natural intelligence of each student manifests more fully when supported with contemplative training. This innovative form of education equips students with perspectives and techniques useful for bringing forth their inherent compassion and wisdom, making for graduates who change the world in positive directions.

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How to Conduct a Warrior Exam

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Introduction

A warrior exam is an oral examination in which each student is asked a single question. A ceremonial atmosphere helps transmute the naturally arising nervous energy into a highly charged opportunity for respectful learning. (Once the basic form of this exam is understood, any number of viable variations may present themselves, as suited to the course content, etc.)

Distribute Sample Exam Questions in Advance

Two weeks prior to the exam, you may distribute a list of about two dozen questions to the students to guide their preparation. Depending on the desired level of exam difficulty, you could either inform students that these are the exact questions that will appear on the exam, or the advance questions could simply be example questions that may differ to some degree from the actual exam questions.

Schedule the Examination Period

Two hours is an ideal time period for examining up to about one dozen students, allowing for responses ranging from 5 to 10 minutes in duration. It is possible to examine this many students in one hour, though this introduces a factor of time pressure in that students must restrict their response to no more than 4 minutes. In this case, it may be expedient for you, rather than a student, to serve as the Questioner. Of course, briefer periods may be used, but pursuit of efficiency can trade off with supportive calmness.

Materials Needed

3 bowls or similar containers: 2 for students' names, 1 for questions

List of exam questions, spaced 2 per page, for taking notes on students' responses.

2 lists of students' names, cut into slips and folded, one name per slip

1 list of exam questions, cut into slips and folded, one question per slip

Set Up

Arrange a circle of seats, one for each student plus one for you. Place two additional seats facing each other in the middle of the circle about four or five feet apart, positioned so that your seat in the perimeter circle is at an angle sixty-to-ninety degrees relative to the axis that runs through both center seats. This allows you to see and hear the Examinee adequately without directly facing the Examinee (so as to minimize possible intimidation).

Place two bowls within reach of the Examinee's seat, one for names and the other for exam questions. Place one bowl within reach of the Questioner's seat for names.

Explain Examination Procedure to Students

Tell students how the exam is to proceed, as follows: Each student gets one turn to be the Examinee, with the order determined by drawing names from this bowl. Each student also gets one turn to be the Questioner, with the order determined by drawing names from this other bowl. (In the case that a student's name gets drawn from both bowls at the same time, that student is given a choice as to which seat to take, with the name slip returned to the other bowl.)

The Examinee plucks their question out of the bowl, reads it silently, and then passes it to the Questioner to read aloud. (Depending on the desired level of difficulty, you may allow students to pass on the first question that they draw, returning it to the bowl after plucking the replacement question, without being able to revert to the original question.) Once the question has been stated out loud, the Examinee holds forth and shares their knowledge and wisdom concerning the specified topic. Once the Examinee declares the response is complete (or if a time limit has been reached), the Questioner has the option of either asking a follow-up question designed to elicit further information (if time permits), or acceding to the completion by stating "I am satisfied." If the Questioner is a student, it is then left to you to exercise the same option of employing one or more questions to draw more from the Examinee. The exam concludes for the Examinee once you declare satisfaction.

Respond to the Examinee's Answer

As the Instructor, you should express satisfaction at the conclusion of each student's examination. Declaring "I am satisfied" does not mean that the student has earned an A grade, or even a passing grade. Rather, it means that within the existing time constraints, you are satisfied that you have received about as complete an answer as you can from that student on the question that they selected.

After a response that is so good it knocks your socks off, instead of simply stating that you are satisfied, if time allows, make use of this teachable moment by asking a question that challenges the Examinee and that may allow other students to learn further.

Take Notes During the Exam

Make note of the particular content in each student's response to ensure that you have an adequate basis for providing subsequent feedback (and grade) to the student. Estimate and jot down the grade earned by each student's performance (which may be subject to later revision based on comparison with other examinations).

Subsequent to the Examination, Provide Written Feedback

In addition to providing the grade earned by the student's exam performance, it is helpful to describe the strengths and/or weaknesses you observed in the student's response so that they understand the basis for the grade they receive. Ideally, all this can be presented to the student in the next class meeting in a brief typed note that includes the exam question they were asked.
