

Some Thoughts on Teaching as Contemplative Practice

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In this article I attempt, through stories and reflections, to give voice to some contemporary experiences, including fears and difficulties, of being a teacher in the early 21st century. I explore the idea that contemplative practices might open paths for negotiating and rediscovering depth, grace, and courage in our work as teachers, in a time when such ways of living are not broadly or politically encouraged. This article thus focuses on ways in which contemplative practices become pedagogical, holding us in the present, in close proximity to the lives of the children we teach, to the places we actually live, and to the current conditions of the world both near and far—these practices, as opposed to distracting and distancing curricula and practices that seem to exist in no place or time, separate from the world, without relations, and with lofty and ungrounded goals located in the future, such as “preparing children to compete in the global economy.” I reflect about ways that the practice of contemplative teaching turns our work into a form of love, memory, and intimacy, reminding us of our deep life relations through time and place, and possibly having incalculable implications for our curriculum interpretation and classroom practices.

One must not build fantasies around the future and just use that as one’s impetus and source of encouragement, but one should try to get the real feeling of the present moment. —Chögyam Trungpa

Elementary School Truths: Everything and everyone is rushing, rushing, rushing. So many meetings. So much curriculum to cover. So many children with so many needs. And then report cards and playground supervision and teacher workshops. How and where is there time to go to the washroom and eat some lunch?

Never mind finding time to contemplate . . .

How are we in education experiencing what Chögyam Trungpa (1991) named this “real feeling of the present moment” (p. 151)? The times seem

strained. Perhaps we can feel this in the ways that schools are being squeezed by the pressures and processes of global forces, both economic and political. As teachers, we are told repeatedly by governments and the media that we are not succeeding, that children are not measuring up. Education has been increasingly described around goals of preparing children for work—in and for the global economy—and the word *democracy* slips away, to be replaced by the language of competition, measurement, and bottom lines. In this linguistic slippage, the possibilities for our work with children in schools seem to narrow. Among my colleagues and within myself, I sense a growing fear: Our work will never be enough, our own embodied and experiential wisdom is disregarded, and there will always be another project, another method, another wave of inadequacy and another reform program sold to schools. We feel less freedom to make decisions about children's learning and our teaching. And the children are being measured by test after test that tell us nothing about them as human beings. *We feel so tired.*

Here in the West, we place much faith in the future. Political rhetoric all over North America names children as future workers, as global competitors in a tight market. In such a view, the future is infinitely delayed to a mythical place that never arrives. In such a view, children (and all humans, other species, life) can be seen as resources (or impediments to progress), and the living spaces of life, earth and sea, have become expendable in the names of profit, progress, and nation. Does the line of time draw tight now, strangling us in its narrow hold? Does it cast children out of meaningful time, embodied time and place, and how do we materialize children and ourselves in a living present? *Are we losing our bearings?*

Can we say, with Pema Chödrön (1997), that “we live in difficult times” (p. 146)? Vandana Shiva (1997) described the ways that we are in the midst of a crisis of diversity—that is, a profound closing of the future through the simultaneous and related extinctions of language, culture, and global biodiversity, brought about not by natural process but under the legacy of colonialism, industrialization, and economic globalization. What we feel in our classrooms is happening everywhere. The earth is being squeezed and life ground under. *We sense this happening.*

Then where is hope? Can we find it in difficult times? Might it arrive, subtly, softly, through learning and remembering to live and be in the world and in our classrooms in different ways? Perhaps, in the face of these processes of empire, new urgencies and possibilities are emerging for teachers to be among those who take up the most profound questions of human life with courage and dignity. Bringing about in our classrooms a downsizing, toward more silence and fewer words. Showing how we might learn to find wealth and fullness in our relationships, in community, in dialogue. Unfolding toward more slowness, mindfulness, and heartfulness. Or will we, as Emilia Ferreiro (2003) warned, “let ourselves get carried away by the vortex

of competitiveness and profitability” (p. 56)? Will we allow our distractedness, our busyness, to consume not just us, but the whole earth, all creatures, all life? The stakes are high. *This is not a test.*

I return, this year, to public school teaching after 8 years of graduate study and university teaching. Committing myself to exploring the meaning of contemplation as part of teaching practices, I am trying to understand the ways that bringing mindfulness to *the moment of teaching* might be a healing project. I do not want to fall back into old habits and patterns. It is easier for school to be a rushing time, to speed swiftly through each day, to hurry children in their learning. But I vow to learn to go more slowly, to breathe more, to make more space for children’s minds and lives and experiences.

August 31, 2005

Tomorrow is the first day of school. The leaves are already turning yellow, red, brown. The air snaps crisp in the mornings. Tomorrow the children arrive. They arrive already labeled and categorized. English as a second language. Refugee. Autistic. Down syndrome. Attention deficit disorder. Gifted. Behavior problem. Grade 3. Grade 4. Normal. The children arrive to me as categories, even before I meet them or know their names.

My body prickles with anxiety. I am not ready.

Breathe.

I meditate on these categories, on the meaning of the labeling and medicating of children so that they can “fit” into the school system. Consciously rejecting this vision, I push away the categories in my mind. Special needs. No. ESL. No. ADHD. No. Down syndrome. No. Gifted. No.

No.

I prepare this room for children to come. I try to make a sanctuary without rigid categories or expectations. Places to be quiet and places to be together. Places for our minds and hearts to meet, to think new thoughts together that we have not thought before. Who knows what can happen? Acknowledging my anxiety and hope and anticipation all at once, I tell myself to slow down. Slow down and breathe.

Yes.

Come in. Welcome.

Bringing mindfulness to the moment of teaching is one way of bringing a deeper timebound and earthbound thoughtfulness to our work with children. It is not easy to enter this mindful space-time in educational places, not only because of our constant busyness and overwhelming amount of work, but also because a critique is often expressed by critical voices toward the use of contemplative practices in education, whether in schools or in academic research, as being too inward, too private, and simply a personal journey not connected to others. Ruben Habito (1997), in an essay about the connections between meditation and ecology, challenged this notion

with the argument that contemplative practices are important to the “deepening of one’s mindfulness” (p. 168), and that through practicing mindfulness, a person can gain a stronger presence in the world, what he called “a greater sense of wholeness and at-homeness in ordinary life” (p. 168).

Through efforts to be contemplative, to meditate—if even for a moment—we become present at those places where life is integrated and connected, at those places where knowledge and wisdom are born. In this way, meditation becomes a source of focus, energy, and awareness. We stop being distracted. We can be here, in schools, with children, in life. Habito wrote, “With such an understanding of living the present moment, one lives life and makes decisions in the present in a way that is open to the future and is thereby responsible for it” (p. 171). This is not the fantastical future of the vision of global economic corporations (and Western governments), but the one connected to living and decisions about life today. It is the future emerging through present living relationships. And so it is in this sense that contemplative practices are by no means only inward and personal, but also outward and transformational, rippling out into the world with immeasurable and usually unknowable consequences. We inhabit our lives in time and place, together with others.

Contemplative practices hold us in this *present*, in this interconnected moment, and deeply in its connection through time. In this purposeful action of slowing down, we orient our hearts toward life, both now and in the future. And through this action, the future might open up and out, unfolding from *here*. A deep engagement and presentness to life—to others, to ourselves, to historical circumstances—materialize future possibilities. In this way, one person’s contemplative practice and living are vital to the formation of relationship and community. We sense connections and intuit the ways that boundaries between us are but feeble constructions. Catherine Keller (1986) wrote that

we can feel the future forming in ourselves now, for this my present self will be endlessly taken up and reiterated. The future will—if only to the most trivial degree—feel this present. My soul, my body, my world: ongoing, they will have to take me in. So if I learn to feel the subtle movement from past to present, I may begin to discern the transformation of vast relational patterns, personal and social, as they roll through my present. (pp. 246–247)

September 22, 2005

On the east side of our school yard is a little rise, with a few straggly struggling trees, grass, litter. It is not very nice, but we go there anyway. A warm breeze softly blows against our skin. Each child has chosen a comfortable space. Writing and drawing. In their notebooks are pictures and words of trees, of insects, of leaves, of clouds.

Everything that isn't on the inside of the school. A child runs to me. She has drawn a seagull flying. Beautiful. Captured in motion. The motion of her smile. What she has seen. The curriculum tells us to learn about plants this year. Outside we are experiencing life, alive with our bodies. The soft roughness of the grass under stomachs. The rustle of the wind in the drying leaves. It is noisier than inside. Inside are the sounds of bells, feet in the halls, the loud heater fan in the corner of our room, the voices of 25 children in a small space. Outside there is room enough for all of us. For the trees, for the birds, for our bodies and minds. I see a child stroking a tree, feeling the bark's ridges under his hands. He finds a crack and worries that the tree will die. No one asks if they are "doing it right" or complains about someone else bothering them in their work. Their bodies are grounded. A child who is never settled inside the school, writes and writes as he lays sprawled widely on the soft grass.

In sensing the ways that curriculum and teaching are bound by daily time, space, circumstance, and indeed part of the "future forming in ourselves now," my work with children in schools takes on a sudden and urgent sense of agency and responsibility. The real feeling of the present moment is the material reality of the children's lives, of their families' lives, of all our lives sharing this earth home. Where does courage come from, to open teaching practice to this present earthly moment and not to an unknown future, or to the global economy, or to children being workers? What we do in our classrooms matters deeply to much more than corporations or governments or stakeholders. It matters *to life*. A terrifyingly huge thought. Time becomes ecological, glimpsed in the ways that every moment is profoundly connected through all life through all time. Nothing is insignificant. These relations obligate us. Robert Thurman (2004) wrote, "We need to face the probability of the infinite consequentiality of every single thought, word, and deed" (p. 161).

September 9, 2005

It is the seventh day of school. The children are meditating as they paint and draw flowers all day in the Name of Science. They have as much time as they need. Materials are spread around the classroom. Brushes, paints, drawing pencils, pens, paper. We talk about deep looking, about practicing again and again, about going slowly, taking time. They are excited by the aphids on the stems, the aphids crawling across their papers. It is now quiet. And now noisy with chatter and laughter. Now giggling. Now surprised voices praising the work of the next person at the table. Now quiet again. Now at the end of the day the tables and floor are scattered with flowers. The color splash of drying paintings.

Teaching as contemplative action is deliberate. The path that I walk together with children emerges from the place of choosing what to think

about, what to focus on, what direction the day-to-day, moment-to-moment work will take. What will occupy children's minds in this space? Robert Thurman (2004) reminded us that everything we do in our lives is already a form of meditation, and therefore that it matters what we choose to think about. I remind myself consciously that there are parts of teaching that I should not allow to occupy my mind and heart. Not thinking too much about preparing for the future. Not thinking too much about high-stakes exams. Not thinking too much about competition, either between children, colleagues, or schools. I can choose what to think about.

September 30, 2005

I meditate today on the ways that schooling practices have tended to separate and distance us from one another. Each child is labeled a "learner." I am labeled a "teacher." We are caught in the Western dualist nightmare where I am supposed to do something to them, rather than something with or for them. Something together.

We are living in a time of intense strain in the global community, not just political and economic violence, but on local and global ecosystems. In the West, we have learned well the habit of disassociating the human from nature, of seeing ourselves as separate and apart. This deep forgetfulness.

The walls of the schools, so often without windows, distance us from the world. We might forget the changing leaves outside, or the weather, or that the world sustains our life and breath. In the schoolyard there are ladybugs that delight the children. They laugh and shout, running back and forth with pleasure and excitement. I vowed to go outside more often this year. So far, we have spent too much time inside our classroom. Too much time engaged in individual work. Not enough time talking together. Not enough time outside. And I wonder, once again, if it is even possible, through contemplative effort and action, to nurture a different intimacy with life and knowledge in this place called school.

To bring mindfulness to the moment of teaching reminds me that it is when I forget the interconnected relations between us, when I see the child as a "skin-encapsulated ego" (Keller, 2002, p. 274), as a "separate self," distanced from me, that I am overwhelmed by feelings of anger, incompetence, and helplessness in this work. When I get a momentary glimpse of the fragile connections binding us together in this earthly life, I am suddenly moved. I hear the beauty, thought, depth, brilliance of a child's thoughts. Opening my own heart to them, I am being transformed and moved by this friendship with young people.

To bring mindfulness to the moment of teaching means bringing awareness to what I think and feel. To my fears. It means working hard to give up the desire for absolute control over this classroom space in order to create more spaciousness, more openness, more listening. More room for life.

More time for the delicate balances, intimacies, and complexities of this space to emerge.

October 4, 2005

All morning I have been rushing and rushing. There was another organizational staff meeting at lunch, and I have a meeting after school with a parent. The teachers pass one another in the hall at top speed. We laugh about it in these public places, but in private we talk about how stressed and overwhelmed we feel, how we might burst into tears at any moment.

My hurried trip down the hall toward my classroom to prepare for the afternoon is interrupted by hysterical sobbing at the playground doors. A tiny child is standing there with his eyes squeezed tightly shut. Blood is smeared across his cheek and his lip is puffed out. Between sobs he tells me how he tripped and fell on the playground. I tell him it doesn't look too bad, as I wince at the little bits of sand embedded in his lip and scraped chin. We hold hands and walk slowly down the hall together. We find a quiet place to sit and I clean his face for him. He stops crying. We sit there together until the bell rings for the afternoon to start.

And I realize that I am ready enough for teaching this afternoon.

To bring mindfulness to the moment of teaching is to be able to respond to what is really going on, to life as it presents itself, with all of its surprises from moment to moment. It is preparing for that, not for the supposed future; rather, it brings the future into this moment already here. We do not know what is coming, or if we will be together in the future, but today we are here, together, now, in this place. In this time. We hold lightly to this moment, taking it seriously, knowing that what we do now creates the future. We delight in ladybugs crawling over our arms in the fall sunshine.

October 12, 2005

We are gathered on the carpet reading Jon Muth's (2005) beautiful picture book Zen Shorts for the sixth time. Slowly. Only a few pages this time. Listening to the poetry in the words. Noticing the details in the illustrations. Talking about the meaning of the stories. Zen stories. Messages meant for hearts. Then the children are finding comfortable spaces around the room. Writing. Deep in thought. We share our words. They merge together, creating a new story between us. Many weeks pass between the first reading and the sixth reading. New insights continue to be formed. A child says, "It took Jon Muth a long time to write this book, so we should take a long time reading it." And so we stay here in this story, an intimate dwelling place we now share.

Contemplation is a way of gathering insight and stillness together. It brings an urgency into our ordinary, every moment lives—not into extraplanetary

life, or wishful thinking, or dreaming of the future. How important this seems in our future-obsessed profession, projecting its fears and anxieties about the lives of children, with extreme pressures on teachers to make children perform to some specific standard at some precise future moment. We are easily distracted by these demands. We might even have an out-of-body experience in these buildings. We lose our grounding in life, time, the earth. We forget that children come as they are.

October 15, 2005

Some days, everything seems to go wrong at school. How is it that I am so easily distracted by the tensions and stresses of this work? I have such lofty ideas, but am often overwhelmed by the external demands. I notice how quickly I slip into that place of “I’m not working hard enough,” or “The children aren’t learning what they are supposed to,” or worse, “The children are not who they are supposed to be.”

There are days when I forget that life is a mystery.

Then today, one of them whispers to me in a sad, shy voice, “I’m so hungry.” I feel suddenly jolted back to the present, body-slammed away from the place of fearing the government math achievement exam at the end of the year. How did I get there?

Breathe.

It’s hard to stay here, in this moment. Hard to bear their hunger, or their hurting bodies, or their grief at losing their homes in wars, in earthquakes, in economic troubles. Perhaps it is easier to fantasize about a pleasant future if we all just work hard enough.

Distractions and stresses arrive suddenly as waves of busyness. It is hard to find time to think. It is hard to find time to be present to children. Tears of frustration burn in my eyes on the way to work and I blink them back. I listen to the world news on the car radio and I think that I do not know how to be a teacher in this world.

Remember that the urgency of life is already here in the very difficult work of moving through a single day, of negotiating relationships and making decisions about what to do next in this teaching work. That is already difficult enough, urgent enough. I struggle to live in the midst of the tensions between the excessive performance demands of this profession and the ways the heart witnesses the truth about the world in the stories of children’s lives. In the stories of our own lives. In the story of the earth. I am learning that bringing mindfulness to this moment of teaching means practicing facing this anxiety, loosening my grip, and convincing myself that there is not so much to do after all.

October 10, 2005

It is early Monday morning. The sun is rising, again, as it does—as it has—an enormous pink orange prairie sky. Contemplate the geological time of the earth. The

time of the universe Spectacular overwhelming incomprehensible cosmic time. And the time of the singular individual life. The life of one child in this classroom. In my mind, I try to hold these together as I prepare for teaching today. To not lose perspective. To remember in those moments when life seems small or trivial, that life is miraculous. Amazing. This interconnected earth. This ecologically connected and arising life where the circulating planet breath moves between all life, from species to species, shared without boundary.

It takes so much effort to hold myself in this place. To try to find the meaning of this work as a teacher within the context of life on this planet, to see our lives in this classroom as part of the arching time of life, and the body space of life. Time spirals and I feel dizzy.

But then I arrive at school, and I see children playing on the playground, their bodies are swinging and they are laughing together. I breathe and orient myself to this day. Just one sun rising. Just one day. Just today. This moment of laughter and love echoing from the climbers. Children from all over the world, speaking dozens of languages, are playing together in peace.

Through contemplation I try to invoke a historical situatedness in these relationships with children. Attempting to understand the complex ways that we came to be here together in this moment matters ethically for how our days emerge in this classroom space we share. Not allowing ourselves to be situated in a future time of wishful thinking and fantasies, I see that our time is already more than enough time. The time of our living presently might already overwhelm us. Some of the children I know have suffered a lot, more than any one human being should in a lifetime. Some of them are exhausted and are in desperate need of a healing place, quiet, joyful, community. To hold them in my heart has meant meditating on suffering. But to linger in those places of pain and sorrow, to try to grasp what they mean for human living and for children's learning lives in schools does not mean dwelling in some kind of hopeless melancholy, but rather finding a place where we can work and be present together in the lives and bodies we truly inhabit. Perhaps it means finding a place where "the task of life becomes to meditatively work toward the happiness of all beings" (Fisher, 2002, p. 113). I wonder what might happen if *this* were the vision and goal of our schools.

October 10, 2005

The poet David Whyte (1998) warns about making our children too small for the world. How do I not let life become too narrow, too small, to hold their questions, dreams, and experiences? How do I hold all the complexity of the world present in my heart as I open the classroom door in the morning? Like so many classrooms in urban North America, our classroom is an intersection in time and place, a meeting of historical circumstance where human vulnerability and suffering might be revealed

and exposed. Children in our class talk about the wars their families have lived through. I tell them quietly that this is a good way to use the word sorrow, which we have recently learned from a story we read together.

I consider the ways that I find myself, here, face to face in this moment with global imperialism, violence, competition over resources, growing ecological instability, and the genocides of the late 20th century. I meditate on all this in an attempt to remember my own implicatedness in these interconnected events, to not become distracted by the pressure to shove math facts into the children's minds. I am trying to understand what is going on. Trying to get the feeling of this present moment. Trying to find stillness with the children. To be with the life and with the math. And for even the math to become meditative, beautiful, and shared between us in wondrous ways.

Perhaps a miracle will grow out of this present situation. Out of all this struggle, suffering, diversity, creativity. Bringing a contemplative attitude to preparing for the day, choosing what to think about, perhaps creates classrooms where life can be lived in many possible and diverse ways, through our relations and the spiraling-out stories of each person here. The ways we influence one another. The spiraling-out story of the earth, the other planets. The spiraling-out history of the universe, of infinite time magnificent and incomprehensible. Perhaps then, the talk about preparing children to succeed in the global economy will fade to a background murmur, not able to enter this place made sacred through our relations.

October 19, 2005

We spend time at our staff meeting talking about how to get our school's test results up. That dizzy feeling is starting again. I feel disoriented. What are we doing here? Who are we competing against? Surely not the tens of millions of children in the world not going to school at all, and not those working literally to the bone to find even meager food for their families, and not the ones orphaned or dying of AIDS in Africa. Surely not them. What are we racing toward and what is the prize at arriving? What are the costs of losing? What happened to working toward the happiness of all beings?

I want to know what it means to learn and teach, and to be together, in a world where there is a Rwandan genocide, a Chernobyl, a September 11th and its violent arching responses. I don't understand what it means to teach and learn in a world without whales, grizzly bears, wild salmon, or monarch butterflies, and so many species, languages and cultures whose names I did not get to learn. Whose names these children will know only as memory, no longer possibility.

I ponder these questions as I prepare for the children to arrive today. So often teaching is represented (and even attempted) as a smooth series of operations and transactions, of simply imparting knowledge, of children moving from activity to activity, from grade to grade. This façade crumbles to dust when Iraq and Bosnia are

literally present in our classrooms, in the faces of living, breathing children. I am paralyzed.

Contemplation is not a method, but rather a practice—an everyday practice that can transform the world. It is difficult work. It is about being prepared to meet life moment by moment as it arrives. Being in this moment is hard. Sometimes we feel disappointed. Sometimes overwhelmed. Sometimes also surprised by joy and beauty. This discipline of greeting each moment as it arrives seems somehow opposite to the ways we are often expected to be in schools. It locates us in a larger vision, in a more expansive and generous place-time. It is making space to remember that we are in the midst of all these many relations, always. It is trying to write a different story about what it means to be in schools in the context of what is happening globally, ecologically, politically, economically.

David Whyte (2001) suggested that we might be educating ourselves out of our relations, developing amnesia, a forgetfulness as a result of the speed of our lives: “We forget that our sanity is dependent on a relationship with longer, more patient cycles extending beyond the urgencies and madness of the office” (p.118). Slowing down and being *here* brings us face to face with the implications of ignoring our connectedness. It reminds us of our deep ethical obligations to life over and before politics or economics and the demands they make on our performance as teachers. Through contemplating, we might realize that we have to take a stand, that we have to stand for something. We find courage to face the day-to-day daily-ness of our lives, and the enormous ungraspable flow of life and time outside the walls of schools. The economy, the workplace, the factory, and the school are not our true home. Ecologically, the earth is the only true habitat, supporting our lives and relationships in a radical interconnectedness and arising through time. Perhaps, if only for a moment, contemplative practices in education can bring us to this intimate ground, settle us down. If only for a moment.

September 20, 2005

A moment of wonder today. A child, recently arrived in Canada, exclaims that he didn't know! He didn't know, he says, laughing, about the leaves on the trees turning yellow and falling off. The awe in his voice. He didn't know. He is so surprised. Fall has arrived quickly this year. Not much time for leaf-crunching walks. Or for noticing the beauty and loveliness of this place that is our home. We have been collecting and drawing leaves in our sketchbooks, but I wonder if only one person in our class has really noticed them. This child gave us all a gift today.

The time of life. This fleeting fragility. Contemplating mortality. Making friends with time, with contingency, with the ways everything depends on everything else. This, so that we do not waste children's *time*. We understand

that their time is important. This is the only life they have. Holding the moment of a child's life in our minds, we remember that their life-time is precious, that all life, as part of the whole woven time of life, matters in ways we cannot know. This obligation to the world and life is ecological, very serious, very deep. What is at stake is the human species' relationship(s) with all life on earth. Such an understanding of time is in tension with economic time that has governed schools throughout their industrial history. It is ecological and relational time, grounded in the earth. The time that is very old and very deep, grinding down mountains and making sand. While a child sits frustrated in a hard chair in school watching the clock tick slowly, so slowly.

September 25, 2005

Violence erupts in our classroom through words. A suffering and broken child speaks in a loud cruel voice with hatred and malice, in public, about another child who is sitting nearby. He will not stop when asked. The words are spilling out and out, like poison falling from his lips, spreading around the room. Like bombs. Like death. I am overwhelmed with something like sadness. Like anger. I cannot speak. I am the teacher and I could not stop this terror.

Tomorrow we will try again. Try again toward peace. Day by day.

Contemplative teaching moves with time and in space, to the rhythms of life, to what is happening now. It is willing to doubt. To be uncertain. To not know what to do. It is responsive and responsible. Obligated to this time and not an unknowable future. Chögyam Trungpa (2005) wrote that "the practice of meditation is based, not on how we would like things to be, but on what is" (p. 43). He suggested that the only way to relate to the present moment is through "relating with the emotional situations of daily life in a meditative way, by working with them, being aware of them as they come up. Every situation then becomes a learning process" (p. 49). We don't know what is going to "come up" in our classrooms when we resist planning everything ahead of time, resist imposing our structures and desires and wishes on the situations, making space for children's lives and children's bodies. Different paths not yet perceived might open up through children's questions and wonderings. And then new languages and possibilities might emerge, perhaps taking us beyond the language of measurement and accountability, into places that are fresh, surprising, confusing, difficult, and wonderful.

October 28, 2005

I often forget to take time. Time to linger and be still. I forget to give children time to linger and be still. I forget that it takes time to wait for ideas to arrive. I am guilty of

hurrying them along, of hurrying myself. I don't even know where we are going. And still I hurry hurry hurry. I can feel their anxiety and mine also. I think they have caught it from me. Teaching is difficult work. But one thing I have learned: Tomorrow is time to try again.

Life spirals out from here and everywhere. Intermingling relations unknowable and mysterious. To bring mindfulness to the moment, discovering again and each day how teaching might be an act of meditative discernment, of wisdom, of love. To remember our connections to the earth, to all life, through time, into the future and to beginnings long in the past. To not forget the weather, the others, all that sustains us. To take time for poetry, for just being together, for listening to the “silence of the world turning” (Domanski, 2002, p. 245). The future of the earth might depend on this. To not be distracted. To remember that our lives are mortal, fragile, lovely. To remember the lives that children have already lived, so that what we do in our classrooms does not erase their time, their experiences, their knowledge, their languages, their own lived connections to the world. To send them a message of courage, peace, and love. To create a place where children can connect to the world, each one, in his or her own way and time. To imagine our work as sacred, these decisions full of infinite consequences. To remember that we are all connected here. That we are all connected here. That we are all connected here. Today.

Thank you to my friends and colleagues who shared conversations and encouragement with me during the writing of this article, and especially to my doctoral supervisor, Dr. David Geoffrey Smith at the University of Alberta, who has made space and supported this line of work in difficult times.

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Download Citation on ResearchGate | On Sep 1, 2006, JACKIE SEIDEL and others published Some Thoughts on Teaching as Contemplative Practice. While contemplative practices have been foundational to wisdom traditions throughout recorded history, it is only recently that these practices are being examined in different contexts of learning, particularly in higher education. In the past decade, several academic conferences and a growing educational literature have focused on contemplative approaches to teaching, learning and knowing (Brady, 2007; Duerr et al., 2003; Hart, 2004; Miller, 1994; Seidel, 2006; Thurman, 2006). Contemplative Practices provide the self-awareness to objectively and mindfully be present and aware of one's thoughts so they can be viewed as mere phenomena flowing in and out of one's consciousness (along with our perceptions, viewpoints, feelings, etc.). I believe that people resonate with different types of Contemplative Practices - which I sometimes call "portals" or doorways, to opening up to the Transcendent within themselves. Some may call these paths to inner awareness; portals to awakening; self-realization, and more. I have learned over many years of practice and study that these He began teaching the method to priests on retreat at the abbey. "I have to confess," Meninger says, "that when I first started teaching it, because of my training, I did not think it could be taught to laypeople. When I say that now, I'm so embarrassed. I can't believe I was that ignorant and stupid." I started teaching them what I call "contemplative prayer according to The Cloud of Unknowing," what later came to be known as "centering prayer." That's really how it began. Can you tell us a little about The Cloud of Unknowing? It helps you to bury distracting thoughts. Should you also separately pray for other things, like world peace or Aunt Susie's cancer? The Cloud of Unknowing is very insistent on this: that you must pray.

my contemplative practice helps me keep a balanced perspective and gain a somewhat wider vision on the turmoil of events that constitute daily life. with the idea that by gaining awareness of our thought processes. and my philosophy of education has developed alongside this practice. Finding ways to enact these values in my day-to-day work with colleagues and students became a mission. Contemplative Practice Examples. Teaching and Learning Resources. About Us. The abstracts and links below provide examples of contemplative practice and classroom exercises as it is evolving across various disciplines and within the broader scholarship of contemplative pedagogy: In-Class Contemplation: "What we know of learning is that the predominant factor is not merely time on task; it is the quality of attention brought to that task." And, in some cases, how much a person can love another and still utterly disagree with her worldview and ethics. Refraining from judgment, if only for a few minutes, opened the door to peaceful, honest, and directly spoken disagreements. Sid Brown, Professor of Asian Studies, Sewanee: The University of the South, "Cultivating Wonder." Contemplative Practice. Whilst we work within a physical discipline both highly structured and refined, ultimately the body is the vehicle to use the mind in a specific way. Save to profile. Teachers communicate an experience of Yogasana based upon their own practice experience and through the practitioner program levels we offer courses rather than classes, endeavouring to be systematic in this communication. Alan Goode shares some thoughts on teaching Iyengar Yoga. Asanas and Poses Yoga Practice. Exploring yoga through technique, timings, sequence and repetition.