Embodied Presence: Contemplative Teacher Education

13

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I'm slowly becoming more willing to be seen—more relaxed, with more mindfullness, hoping to take less cover behind the self-created teacher cocoon. This kind of transparency paradoxically fills me with great anxiety about not-knowing what is going to happen. Yet I feel more alive—constantly being mindful of the shifting situations in the class, making choices in split-second moments to remain open rather than closed… (TKL'09)

This student's story exemplifies the transformative process that graduate students experience during their studies in the Contemplative Education program at Naropa University, located in Boulder, Colorado. It is one of many reflections collected since the program's inception in 2000, describing an "inner shift" that occurs when students engage in a variety of contemplative practices during two summer intensives, and carefully-sequenced online courses that extend through 2 years. These students, classroom teachers for the ages of early childhood through adulthood, go through a metamorphosis that changes them from the inside-out—from being facilitators of knowledge and skills to being teachers who are able to "read" situations and respond with a synchronized body and mind. As in the story above, this synchronization of body and mind occurs organically in the moment; it is not forced or planned. However, for that organic unfolding to occur on a regular basis, and in the midst of a teacher's often hectic life, a solid foundation of skills must be learned and practiced.

The concept of a synchronized body and mind in teaching is often overlooked in teacher education and professional development in the USA, especially with current federal, state, and local emphasis on rigorous academic standards aimed at preparing a generation of citizens capable of competing in a world economy. Indeed, ever since the landmark report "A Nation at Risk" (1984), and the more recent Obama Administration's "Race to the Top" funding initiative,[1] the federal and state emphasis on "high standards" has directly impacted pedagogy and curriculum in all major subject areas to the detriment of more creative, social, emotional,

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[1] A 2009 initiative by the Obama Administration, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, included a program called "Race to the Top." This initiative offered competitive grants to schools in the USA that could prove they were providing innovative curriculum, closing "the achievement gap," attracting and retaining highly-qualified administrators and teachers, and raising test scores. Since 2009, the U.S. Department of Education has offered additional "phases" of funding for these, and other, initiatives.

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and intrapersonal skills. More importantly, it has redefined standards for teacher education and professional development by equating effective teaching with adoption of the Common Core Standards and higher student test scores on a variety of state-driven assessments. The results of these initiatives, unfortunately, place teachers in the predicament of having to "teach to the test" or risk being removed from their posts when scores are less than desirable. These outcomes are being vigorously debated in a variety of states with some, like Texas and Virginia, opting out of federal funding altogether in order to avoid the punitive measures of noncompliance.[2]

Although adoption of the Common Core Standards, or better scores on state-driven assessments, are not inherently detrimental to children's learning, they do overlook a critical feature of teachers' success with their students' learning: the teacher's self-awareness—a mindful awareness of what is occurring, not just from a detached self-other perspective, but also from the perspective of the teacher's own mind, heart, and senses. There is a symbiotic relationship between good teachers and their students, which is dependent upon the teacher's inner and outer intelligence.

What we offer in the Contemplative Education Department at Naropa University provides the foundation from which the path of a teacher's evolution into fuller inner and outer development is paved, and we find that THAT is what leads to better student learning. We call the primary feature of the teacher's inner and outer development *embodied presence.*

In this chapter, we emphasize the somatic or physical dimensions of embodied presence, highlighting a uniquely potent dimension of our program's approach. We discuss the emotional and conceptual aspects as well, but more as context for bodily presence. We provide a definition of embodied presence, and how it directly relates to the practice of mindful awareness that is being explored in this series. We offer examples from students' writings and faculty observations, and provide sample exercises used in our program that aim to help students understand in a visceral way what it means to become more embodied and more present. The results of such inner work can be quite surprising, satisfying, and far-reaching. One student wrote in her journal:

> Over time, and with practice, I have begun to build a connection to my experience by paying attention to my sensations, thoughts and feelings to root me in my presence. I am beginning to shift my perspective, from a primary concern about how I am seen to feeling the moment and moving from there. I have become much more flexible in teaching …, and that flexibility is reflected in a freshness in my being after the class is done: I feel replenished, rather than depleted. (CT'10)

What Embodied Presence Is *Not*

Before elaborating on what we mean by embodied presence, we would like to first explain what it is *not*. Embodied presence is not a teaching "disposition" as is framed by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), a primary organization that identifies and enforces standards expected in most teacher training institutions in the United States.[3] As explained in Standard 1: *Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Dispositions,* Professional Dispositions are

> attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities. These positive behaviors support student learning and development. NCATE expects institutions to assess professional dispositions based on observable behaviors in educational settings.[4]

[2] Office of the Governor Rick Perry. (2010, January 13). Gov. Perry: Texas Knows Best How to Educate Our Students: *Texas will not apply for Federal Race to the Top Funding.* Retrieved June 25, 2014: http://governor.state.tx.us/news/press-release/14146/); and Richmond Times-Dispatch (2013, October 10). Virginia News: Va. not pursuing $45 million Race to the Top grant. Retrieved June 25, 2014: http://www.timesdispatch.com/news/state-regional/va-not-pursuing-million-race-to-the-top-grant/article_9128279c-a917-5346-a402-f8afade4a475.html

[3] With the July 1, 2013 de facto consolidation of NCATE and TEAC into CAEP as the new accrediting body for educator preparation, please visit http://caepnet.org for general information (TEAC = Teacher Education Accreditation Council; CAEP = Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation).

[4] NCATE Mission Statement: www.ncate.org

According to these national standards, "dispositions" have a rather solid quality that is observable, measurable, and capable of being assessed. What we are providing in our contemplative education program—embodied presence—does not negate that focus. We agree that teachers should be observed handling situations with honesty, consistency, and a positive, problem-solving demeanor that supports the learning needs of every student.

However, these national standards do not address the importance of training teachers in establishing the underlying foundation that will help them, in authentically personal and professional ways, negotiate the tricky territory of daily events as they unfold in a classroom. To uphold the belief that all children can learn requires teachers to be fully present to the plethora of multifacted situations that arise each day, with mind and body synchronized—in short, having an embodied presence. Training in the development of embodied presence means working with the under-current of energy that subsequently affects professional dispositions in an authentic way. Our education starts where our teachers are, mentally and emotionally, and with regard to their body. We provide them with opportunities to learn directly about the aspects of their "being" that inform their teaching and interactions with others. Faculty members in our program also participate in this learning process, supporting students in the Master's program in their growth toward embodied presence from the inside-out. In this way, the flowering of teachers' "dispositions" is not an add-on to previous curriculum and methods found in teacher training programs, but rather a process of infusion where one's entire being is transformed, and then emerges with honesty, sincerity, and an open heart. Working from this pedagogy of embodied presence, one student remarked,

> I have been using my breath as a focal point in my instruction … [and] my instruction is more vivid, because I am experiencing it within my body simultaneously. At the very least, including myself in the instruction makes me feel calm, allowing me to connect authentically with my experience and provide creative sequences for my students. (EB'09)

Here, we see an example of the symbiotic relationship between the development of embodied presence and one person's teaching practice; the former informs the latter, thereby strengthening the overall delivery of instruction.

Second, *embodied presence* is not "acting." Teaching is often compared to putting on a performance or acting for an audience. As such, teacher educators uphold the belief that teachers should receive training in acting so they can put on a great performance to keep students engaged with their learning. As Finkel (2000) noted:

> …we always hear that a teacher is like an actor, and a good class is like a theatrical performance. Most of us do remember fondly those brilliant teachers/actors we may have had. …we left their classes inspired, moved. But did we learn anything? (p. 1)

Although we can agree that there is an element of theatrical performance in teaching, rather than equating the two, we need to understand this relationship in a more holistic, contemplative context. Embodied presence is quite different from professional acting training. An excerpt from a student versed in performing makes this distinction clear:

> I remember beginning presence work with an expectation that 'acting' would be easy for me, but I quickly discovered I possessed an underdeveloped ability to be present and unattached to the spontaneity of each moment. I found myself preparing and over-thinking, and allowing that to determine my actions. I was very tightly attached to making sure I appeared to be 'doing the right thing' and 'moving and speaking with grace.' I was so concerned with how I appeared that I couldn't connect with the experience of presence at all. (CT'10)

This sentiment is summed up by Worley (2001), who writes, "Before we can act genuinely, we need to discover how to be genuine" (p. 4). It is from this perspective that we have drawn our ideas of teaching presence to teachers. We use a more communally based theater model where the separation between performers and

audience is not so rigid. Moving this analogy to a classroom, rather than creating a sensational show for a passive audience, the teacher models a quality of unconditional openness. Here, the mind and body of the teacher, and the minds and bodies of the students, meet in the space between. This *receptive presence*[5] while initiated and cultivated in the body and speech of the teacher includes more of the whole situation—the students, time of day, spatial arrangement of the room, current events, and so on. In this way, the teacher's "performance" can be considered more "shamanistic" in its approach because it draws on the collective wisdom and intelligence of the audience/class to evoke the spirit of learning. In Palmer's (1998) words, it is able to call forth "the community of truth,"

> where we are held together not only by our personal powers of thought and feeling, but also by the power of 'the grace of great things' … the subjects around which the circle of seekers [is] gathered—not the disciplines that study these subjects, not the texts that talk about them, not the theories that explain them, but the things themselves. (pp. 106–107)

This all-encompassing approach invites into a situation all of its aspects in an organically unfolding manner. To be a teacher in this realm means providing not only the opportunity to use everything at one's disposal, but also having an awareness of what is actually there in the first place, and knowing how to use it.

In our culture, we often interpret "actor" or "acting" as being somewhat artificial, where the actor (or teacher in this case) follows a script and pauses in all the right places. Having presence does not deny the value of direct instruction, but goes beyond those limitations; the teacher steps out from behind the metaphorical desk onto the "stage," and becomes fully engaged around the classroom. Everyone and everything is included in this grand ensemble of learning. The teacher is an anchor whose presence in body, voice, and mind empowers the students, themselves, to become fully immersed in the learning process. Having such presence, an embodied teacher brings together the students' collaborative energies in a circle of mutual discovery, where the outcomes may surprise both teacher and students and lead to an excitement for life and learning.

We need to be clear, however, that developing an embodied presence is not an exercise of simply learning a few techniques that are haphazardly applied in the classroom; development at such a deep level requires time and a special context in which embodied presence may be cultivated. Frameworks for self-understanding must be provided on a regular basis through a variety of intellectual, artistic, and physical modes. There needs to be plenty of space for examination of the inner self and support from a caring community of like-minded practitioners. These features, and more, are found within the larger framework of Contemplative Education.

Contemplative Education at Naropa University

> *The basic idea was an institute that would create an interface, a dialogue, between Buddhism and the intellectual culture of the West, as well as with other spiritual traditions. … [Chögyam Trungpa] talked about creating sparks by juxtaposing different traditions. The idea was that if you look at things from different perspectives, you can get to their essence.* (in Midal, 2005, pp. 143–144)

Naropa—rather than being a Buddhist school—was envisioned by its founder[6] as being "Buddhist-inspired." It is non-sectarian in its investigation of contemplative principles and practices from many of the world's wisdom traditions. Graduates are provided knowledge and skills "to meet the world as it is and to change it for the better."[7]

The pedagogical approach at Naropa is the contemplation, or mindfully aware investigation,

[5] This term, "receptive presence" was coined by Lee Worley, and is used throughout her work and writings.

[6] Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche (1939–1987) was the 11th descendent in the line of Trungpa tulkus, important teachers of the Kagyü lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. After fleeing Tibet in 1959 when the Chinese Communist Party took control, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche established a number of learning centers in the West, one of which was Naropa University (est. 1974) in Boulder, Colorado.

[7] Naropa University Mission Statement.

of one's thoughts, emotions, and actions in such a way as to experience them without creating additional overlays that distort their essence. Contemplation leads to experiences where the separation between a subject, and the object being observed is softened.

Emphasis on "nowness" always plays a large role in contemplative education training. The living moment becomes the basis for reflecting on the past or planning for the future. In their coursework at Naropa, students are inspired and encouraged to bring their whole beings to bear on the subject being studied in the moment at hand, and to stay abreast of the waves of moments as they flow forward. Learning in this way has the tendency to provide students with a more relaxed and accepting perspective about their world—one in which they, and others, can be regarded as "basically good."

The idea that human beings are inherently good and sane, and basically intelligent, is fundamental to the concept of contemplative education and is at the root of Naropa University's vision. Chögyam Trungpa coached his early students to appreciate that sanity is more basic to human beings than insanity and that the world is a workable place. Becoming brave about getting to know ourselves, we discover that we are basically good—that our very nature is sane and clear. Seeing this with some certainty in ourselves, we also become aware of how our thoughts and emotions can distort how we perceive the world. With this new awareness of how our minds operate, and the ability to keep a clearer perspective, the world appears more welcoming. We have a place in its evolutionary processes.

Contemplative Education and the Teacher's Inner Life

Contemplative teacher education begins with disciplines that develop the inner life of the teacher, by which we mean the constellation including one's physical manifestation, sense perceptions, intellect, and emotions. This "inner landscape" (Palmer, 1998) grows and develops throughout one's life, influences one's actions, and provides guideposts for determining a life purpose. When we ask ourselves the metaphysical question, "Who am I?" we are seeking to locate and understand our inner life—our "authentic self" (Kessler, 1991; Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2004, p. 221).

For a teacher, this sense of self, or inner life, tends to become overrun with beliefs about the teacher's expected role as disciplinarian, curriculum expert, and ethical role model. Although those particular traits are certainly needed for effective teaching, they fall short of reaching the full realm of the teacher's inner life, where the energy and potential for masterful teaching resides. Of course, not paying attention to that inner life can still result in a teacher who can negotiate the complicated, ever-changing, and highly charged territory of the classroom, but we believe that neglecting to support the teacher's inner life ultimately manifests a feeling of disconnection between the teacher's heart and the students' needs and aspirations (Gatto, 1992; Liston, 2000; Tomkins, 1996). Palmer (1998) calls this "living a divided life," where the identity and the integrity of the teacher are not symbiotically attuned. Such misalignment can lead to misunderstandings and missed opportunities for authentic learning and personal growth—those meaningful "teachable moments" that teachers hope to experience. One student in our program commented:

> I have hidden behind this teacher mask for so long that I'm not sure I know how to function without it… I think I am finally starting to feel the discomfort and disconnect of living a divided life. I am coming to see and understand the many ways I deceive myself. I think all this inner exploration we've been doing over the last year and a half has revealed the extent of my delusions. As difficult as this revelation is to bear, I feel that it is a sign of progress on the path. (AC'09)

The disconnect of wearing a "mask" is quite palpable for this teacher, and although those feelings may go unnoticed by others, they create enough discomfort inside the teacher to genuinely impact instruction.

Anyone attuned to teaching can admit that the profession is certainly not exempt from stressful experiences and feelings.

> Faced with a system that tends to ignore their emotional and developmental needs, teachers are tossed around year after year by a multitude of energy-sapping demands; indeed, the list of things for which teachers are responsible grows longer with every shift in the social and political tides … Since schools are not typically designed to actively and intentionally support the teachers' quest for meaning, teachers who once felt a passion for their craft begin to "burn out," and may end up leaving the profession altogether. (Farber, 1984, 1991; Friedman, 1991; Little & Turk, 1985, in Simone, 2009, pp. 28–29)

For those who stay in the teaching profession, it is clear that their health and overall well-being needs to be taken into account. Organizations like *The Center for Courage & Renewal* have been instrumental in providing renewal for teachers through seasonal retreats, and others, like the Garrison Institute—aimed at nurturing the minds, bodies, and spirits of teacher—are appearing.

In our teacher education program, we are continually engaged in contemplating these questions: What *is* the teacher's inner life, and how can it be cultivated and nurtured? Which practices or exercises lay the most dependable foundation for that cultivation? How can developing an embodied presence enhance student learning in school? After using contemplative approaches with teachers for over two decades, we know that such an undertaking requires a great deal of patience, perseverance, and trust between teacher educators and their students (who are teachers themselves).

How, then, do people cultivate this inner self in order to reach a stage where they can experience an embodied presence? We have learned that the keys to inner growth and realization are the practices of *mindfulness* and *awareness* or—more accurately—*mindful awareness*. Mindful awareness is the basis for a set of skills that can be developed in a relatively short period of time, but which take a lifetime of honing.

Mindful Awareness and the Body

> *The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character, and will. No one is compos sui [master of himself] if he have it not. An education which should improve this faculty would be the education 'par excellence.'* (James, 1984, p. 424)

In Naropa University's Contemplative Education graduate program, activating the inner life begins through unbiased, compassionate investigation using methods based on mindful awareness. The mindfulness dimension involves the seemingly simple act of bringing a focused, yet open, attention to one's experiences, and repeating that mental shift as much as possible throughout the day. Doing this cultivates one's ability to think more clearly and act more deliberately because more information—both subtle and overt—is allowed to arise and be nonjudgmentally considered before moving ahead.

Awareness is understood as holding a spacious, extended quality of mind within which mindfulness can continually reoccur. It could be said that mindfulness is a tool for aligning and stabilizing mind and body while awareness is the integration of oneself within the larger environment. Chögyam Trungpa (1998) elegantly describes the union of the two methods of mindfulness and awareness:

> Right mindfulness does not simply mean being aware; it is like creating a work of art. If you are drinking a cup of tea with right mindfulness, you are aware of the whole environment as well as the cup of tea. You can therefore trust what you are doing; you are not threatened by anything. You have room to dance in the space, and this makes it a creative situation. The space is open to you. (p. 99)

In other words, there is awareness of the space in conjunction with attention on a particular object or person. Being located in the "whole environment" in this way, tends to produce a level of confidence in one's direct experience. With this understanding in mind, the sequence of teacher training in Naropa University's Contemplative Education program starts with practices in mindful awareness that are focused on sensory experiences, emotions, thoughts, and the dimensions and dynamics of space. One student wrote in her journal:

> What Presence allows for is a deep grounding within the physical form of the body in space. [Then, speaking about the concept of fear] What

> does fear *feel* like? I feel it in my shaking belly, in a quickening of my heart rate, in tears that come to my eyes. As I breathe into and through the physical sensations they eventually dissolve. (AB'09)

In the past decade, many research studies have been conducted that provide scientific evidence supporting the development of mindful awareness practices on a person's body and mind, and overall health and well-being. The strong effects of mindful awareness on the health of the body suggests that a more fully embodied mindful awareness may have even greater benefits, as Daniel Siegel (2007) has begun to explore:

> In mindful awareness we are often focusing on aspects of our bodily function … If in mindfulness practice our mind is filled with word-based left-sided chatter at that moment, we could propose that there is a fundamental neural competition between right (body-sense) and left (word-thoughts) for the limited resources of attentional focus at that moment. Shifting within mindful awareness to a focus on the body may involve a functional shift away from linguistic conceptual facts toward the nonverbal imagery and somatic sensations of the right hemisphere. (p. 47)

In our program we are discovering that when mindful awareness is developed in many domains, particularly in the body, teachers have a broad base of presence upon which to draw in order to nourish themselves and to support a more enlivened classroom learning culture. "While teaching we might even forget we even have bodies. But just as in meditation, when our physical bodies are upright, receptive, and present, we are more able to directly contact our inner resources and be more responsive to our students" (Brown, 2011, pp. 77–78).

Embodied Presence

Teachers who have learned mindful awareness practices in our summer program have found them beneficial to their work with children and adults in a variety of learning environments. Students report being able to work more effectively in difficult situations that previously caused a great deal of stress; they seem to have a larger perspective, which enables them to be more patient, resourceful, and confident with decisions. Through essays and journals, students have provided a variety of reflections that include premises about their contemplative education, such as:

1. Intellectual understanding deepens when it is linked to body awareness.
2. With embodied presence, the teacher's thoughts and actions become clearer and more genuine, leading to increased confidence when relating to students and the subject matter.
3. Challenging and unpredictable classroom situations can be met with more flexibility and adaptability by teachers; they are able to more calmly meet difficult situations in a relaxed, yet authoritative manner.
4. Embodied presence practices enliven a sense of curiosity, improvisation, and playfulness in teachers when responding to teachable moments.
5. Embodied presence expands teachers' awareness so that it embraces the entire learning environment. As such, more careful attention is given to the arrangement of the room, use of time, grouping of students, and coordination of the lessons.

These aspects of expanded awareness also invite broader participation from unexpected quarters of the learning environment as teacher and students find new and refreshing ways to be together. All of these effects are evidence, at least from our students' experience, of an increased stable teaching presence and an increased capacity for mixing effective pedagogy with in-the-moment responsiveness.

Using Presence Exercises in Educating Teachers

During two summer programs, and also online in their classes, teachers in our program engage in mindfulness meditation and other practices such

as mindful eating, speaking, and walking. The intention of these practices is to thoroughly integrate mindful awareness in their emotional, perceptual, and intellectual lives. Among the most integrative of all these practices are the ones that focus on the cultivation of authentic communication, which occurs through movements in body and speech. Many teacher educators tend to overlook this dimension, but it is a critically important to the conveyance of knowledge and the receptivity of the teacher. Often, it is the messengers, not the messages, that impact students the most. "We teach who we are," writes Palmer (1998):

> Every class comes down to this: my students and I, face to face [are] engaged in an ancient and exacting exchange called education. The techniques I have mastered do not disappear, but neither do they suffice … Only one resource is at my immediate command: my identity, my selfhood, my sense of 'I' who teaches—without which I have no sense of the 'Thou' who learns. (p. 10)

And who is the "I" who teaches? It is the one who speaks clearly, listens attentively, and stands or moves with intention and grace. Although conventionally speech is thought to mean the talking aspect of body/mind, speech also includes how a teacher stands or sits—the messages that come from body language, as well as the skills of listening and of responding appropriately to the messages coming from students. One student, noticing the subtlety of how her presence was contributing to disconnection with her students, wrote:

> When I give my students directions, I notice that I speak quickly. I can hear my words blending together and feel my eyes rolling into my head. I speak on the exhale of my breath as if I am sighing in boredom. When I ask if there are any questions I speak in a tone that would make any student hesitate to raise their hand. (EB'10)

There are many embodied presence practices we use to bring students in our MA program to a level of development that expands their awareness of the thoughts and emotions residing within; we have chosen three to share*: Lying Down to Standing Up*, *Presenting Yourself*, and *Embodied Reading and Listening*. Below, for each practice, we provide the underlying premise, followed by the sequence of steps used (i.e., method), and finally some potential results of each exercise.

Lying Down to Standing Up Exercise

Premise The body has intelligence that is often ignored in ordinary life. This creates for the student/teacher a nonconceptual arena, an opportunity for exploring the dilemma: What should I do, to do this right?

Method Teachers create a 20-min improvisational movement "performance" that starts from a lying down position on the floor and ends in a standing position. They should not use any familiar vocabulary of movement, such as yoga asanas, calisthenics, or dance forms, but instead allow the body to dictate its preferences for moving. All class members do these solo performances simultaneously. There is also an explicit instruction that this is not a performance for others, but for each person alone. Teachers are told that the ratio of time spent on the floor to standing up is theirs to decide. Once they have moved from lying on the floor, however, they should not return to that posture.

Result Having called this 20-min piece a performance raises several levels of anxiety. Some teachers feel they are not performers and, thus, do not know what to do. Others make large, "artistic" movements and do not fulfill the request to let the body lead the movement by following its own desires. Still others are stumped by what the teacher wants and look about helplessly, hoping to get a clue from what the others are doing.

In discussion afterwards, this exercise offers teachers a lot of information about themselves, personally, as well as about being a student. Some of the learning is quite uncomfortable. Generally, however, after more practice, this exercise can be enjoyable once the performer relaxes and permits the body to lead. Knowing from the beginning that one is moving from lying down to standing means that awareness of each moment can be

the focus. No energy is demanded for making big choices about where one is headed. Used over time, this basic form can be refined in many ways, such as doing the exercise with the eyes closed, or engaging in a "moving duet" with a partner. There are always surprises, no matter how many times the exercise is repeated. We find that, beyond the boredom of repetition are unimagined wellsprings of new inspiration.

Presenting Yourself[8]

Premise The body/mind through awareness can utilize the energy of the audience (or class) to cocreate the moment of meeting. This is particularly helpful for teachers, who tend to experience their energy only dispersing throughout the day and not being replenished at a mutual rate.

Method A space is arranged as a "stage" with an offstage area on either side and space for the audience (i.e., class) in front. All students sit in the audience, and regard the empty stage. They do not speak or physically respond to any aspect of the performances about to occur. They simply witness the performances of classmates. The purpose of the exercise is experiencing how being seen feels in the body when they are "onstage" with the audience or class silently looking at them.

To start, one student comes to edge of the performance space and prepares to make an entrance. It starts with an initial gesture, such as a bow to the stage area, a moment of stillness, or a stretch. The person then enters the stage and stops somewhere onstage. The person stands, mindfully aware, without making any gesture or speech. The student is simply seen by the audience for a moment. The student then exits the stage on either side (not in front), and another student voluntarily rises to repeat the sequence until all of the students have presented themselves.

Result Students may discover their discomfort with being seen and the anxiety that causes different manifestations to arise, such as feelings of *fight or flight*, the need to apologize, or to hide and consequently abandon awareness. For some, a pleasure in being seen arises. Subsequent repetitions can include adding a gesture that arises spontaneously in response to the experience of being seen.

Ultimately Presenting Yourself assists students to trust the moment, to feel the audience for inspiration, and to remain present and aware of the whole. When this occurs, the audience and the performer can "meet in the space between," each side bringing its intelligence to that middle and sparking the learning of the moment—a learning that is often as surprising to the performer/teacher as it is to the audience/students.

Embodied Reading and Listening

Premise Teachers, by training, usually pay attention to content alone and miss the sensory and emotional undertones that enrich the meaning of what is being said. This exercise involves mindful awareness of sound and body during speaking and listening. It integrates conceptual understanding with internal sense perceptions and attunes teachers to their students' communication on both a sensory and content level. It fosters synchronized, authentic, and heart-felt speech and listening.

Method At the beginning level of this practice,[9] pairs of teachers are asked to select a poem or a children's story and to take turns reading it to each other. The readers are instructed to read very slowly in order to enunciate clearly and appreciate the words that they are sharing. Reading slowly also allows readers to hear the sound of

[8] This more advanced exercise, sometimes called the "Stage," supports and furthers the development of presence. Before tackling the challenge of being publicly "seen" students should become familiar with mindful awareness in a more private, individual way, and also in small groups.

[9] More advanced levels involve teachers reading from a text that they would normally read to their own students.

their own voice and actually feel the vibrations of sound in the body.

The listener sits close by and does not look at the reader, focusing only on the sounds and meaning of what is being read. In both roles, listener and reader are asked to lower the locus of offering and receiving to the area of the heart. Shifting communication from the head to the heart further engages the body as an instrument of speaking and listening.

Results The reader and listener may notice and integrate several dimensions: The conceptual content that is being read, sense perceptions (particularly sound), the feeling tones in the voice, and inner responses to those dimensions. This last dimension might be experienced as a tinge of quivering fear from the reader or a feeling of warmth and tenderness in the chest of the listener. Essential to this practice is allowing whatever feelings that arise to coexist without judgment with the other dimensions of the exercise.

Preliminary to the embodied reading and listening exercise, teachers clarify the sense of hearing through other exercises involving mindfully listening to the sounds of a stream or of traffic, wind in the leaves, or children playing on a playground. As with all mindful awareness practices, when one notices the mind commenting on the sounds, one gently and nonjudgmentally lets go of thoughts that arise, and returns to listening to the sounds themselves. One student commented:

> I find that when I'm able to stay with my breath during meditation, I'm able to hear the sound around me - birds chirping, kettle boiling, car engines in the distance, my neighbour's baby crying … But when my thoughts get the better of me, all I can hear is my own voice—and the sounds all around me disappear. My mind chatter separates me from my surroundings … When there is silence in me, there is greater connectedness with the world around me and the world seems much more alive. (KTL'09)

This teacher uses the memory of the Embodied Reading and Listening activity she experienced in the summer program to change the way she speaks to her own class:

> When I catch my "auto-pilot" voice in class, I remember how I felt reading aloud last summer at Naropa. I remember feeling comforted as I let the sounds slowly form on my lips. It was as if I was massaging myself into relaxation. As those memories arise, my tone softens and the speed of my voice slows down. I pause and breathe as I find accurate words to describe the task for my students. I am soothed in the process and able to reconnect with them. (EB'10)

Another teacher articulates how embodied reading has improved and enlivened his classroom instruction:

> I read from Fredrick Douglass's autobiography, and my students were enthralled. I took my time and read carefully and clearly and, even though the language was old fashioned and a bit advanced for 8th graders, they picked up on the ideas he was speaking about with no problem. This was a wonderful way to give a first-hand account and a personal voice to such a major issue (slavery) in American History. (AC09)

Through these and other exercises, our students begin to trust the intrinsic intelligence of their bodies and senses. Although understanding and examining the functions of the thinking mind is essential to learning, it is a fundamental skill in contemplative education to be able to distinguish among thinking, perceiving, and feeling. When those separate capacities are clearer in the teacher's experience, they function better independently and in greater harmony with each other.

Embodied Teaching through "Bridge Practices"

It is a big step from practicing embodied presence in a safe university environment to skillfully integrating presence during the busyness of a typical school day. To help with that transition, we encourage our students to engage in "bridge practices" which are practices that help integrate mindfulness into daily activities. One example of a bridge practice is walking meditation, which is normally done during long sessions of mindful awareness meditation. It involves

mindfully attending to the sensations in the soles of one's feet and the swing of the legs as one walks, usually slowly, around the meditation area. During walking meditation, there are many subtle distractions, so students learn to reestablish mindful awareness while in motion; in this way, walking meditation is a method for bridging mindful awareness with the world. We encourage our students to use an adapted form of walking meditation when walking from their car to the classroom or when walking down a hallway between classes. When using this adapted walking meditation in school, teachers walk at their normal pace, but still practice awareness as they go. To prepare for walking meditation as a bridge practice in schools, during our summer program, we practice walking meditation using different speeds and in a variety of environments.

Another bridge practice is standing meditation. Here, the focus of mindfulness is on feeling the direct contact of one's feet with the floor while standing and, at the same time, opening one's awareness to the surrounding space of the room. The key to this practice, as in all mindfulness practices, is allowing one's direct experience (in this case the sense of touch) to function without being obscured by conceptual commentary. That is, when thoughts arise during standing meditation, one gently lets them go and returns to the sensory experience of one's feet on the floor. Teachers are encouraged to use standing meditation for brief periods, such as while monitoring tests or supervising student discussion groups. Teachers report feeling a stronger connection with their bodies, a sense of being "grounded" on the earth, and they see it as an opportunity to return to the present moment. One student, fairly new to the teaching profession, shared this story:

> There I was, standing in front of a classroom of fidgety third-graders, who were really not that interested in what I was teaching. My mind was racing, and then it went blank. It was apparent to everyone that I was losing control, and fast! Then, I remembered the standing meditation, so I just flashed on that and felt my feet on the floor. I felt the floor holding me up solidly and surely; I took a deep breath, and then—suddenly, without any thought at all, I knew what to do. I redirected the lesson, and the children got right back into their learning. (JS'08)

Contemplative Academics

Fundamentally, contemplative education is "weaving academic study and the practices of mindfulness and awareness" (Midal, 2005, p. 146). In order to thoroughly transform their own students' learning, teachers in our program must themselves integrate contemplative practice into their academic learning experiences. Over the years, the Naropa Contemplative Education program has not only taught contemplative practices, but also infused all the academic endeavors with contemplative dimensions. Thus, in our program, all traditionally academic activities, such as reading, writing, discussion, exams, and studying, have contemplative dimensions associated with them; those aspects of education are further enhanced with ongoing exercises in embodied presence. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore all the ways in which embodied presence is integrated into academics in our program, so we will focus on just one: the Master's Project.

Master's Projects are developed over the course of the final two online semesters and provide the means for students to explore more deeply and multidimensionally any topic of their choice that resonates with their lives as teachers. Students' examinations and analyses of Master's Project topics can be deeply personal explorations of their own teaching practice or more widely applicable research studies with children in school. Experiencing and then describing experiences via the Master's Project, students in our program develop an approach to their academic work that is precise, sensory, and experiential, and becomes a living model for them to integrate contemplative intelligence into their academic work.

At the end of their projects, students present their work to faculty, peers, and (sometimes) family members and are assessed not only on the

content of their study in terms of its thoughtfulness, depth, and organization, but also their embodied presence as they deliver information to their audience. After each presentation, in addition to a critique of the content, faculty members provide feedback about each student's presence, as observed through the aesthetics of room arrangement, the student's clarity of voice, his or her pacing of the presentation, and authenticity when responding to participants' questions. Students report that this approach to the presentation actually provides further insights for them into the meaning of the project itself. In this way, the presentation becomes yet another venue for practicing embodied awareness and learning something new from that experience. Furthermore, their practice of embodied presence during the presentation fosters an unexpectedly profound connection with the audience.

Conclusion

Teachers become contemplatives with the aspiration that their approach to teaching students will have depth and meaning, and genuinely reflect who they are. The fruition of our program, contemplative teaching, can be said to be the embodied presence of the teacher fully engaging with students in academic pursuits in the broadest sense of that term. Teachers communicate their presence and begin to transform their learning community from the inside-out. Doing so cultivates improvisational, intuitive teaching—embracing teachable moments and letting go of the "agenda" if it is not working.

No two teachers in our program take their Naropa education into their classrooms in the same way. It is at the core of our approach to provide the space and opportunity—indeed the encouragement—for each teacher to let the heart and mind find its unique manifestation in each particular learning environment. This recent graduate, a primary-school teacher, recalled a poignant moment of inner-awareness-to-outer-manifestation as she was seated on the floor one day with her young students clustered around:

> I felt slow and steady, and my whole body was aware of the energy in the classroom space. I noticed the children's bottoms moving and their hands busy in their laps as they sat there before me. I slowly changed my position from sitting cross-legged to sitting on my knees. The children asked if they could sit like me. This took a few minutes, but soon they found stillness in this new position. From this transition, one of the students asked about the paint jars on the corner shelf that I had forgotten about. Right then, on the spot, I came up with an activity to paint our letter of the week. This was not at all what I had planned to do. Before painting [our letter], we all sat there gently tickling our faces with our favorite brushes. I appreciated the simplicity [of the moment]—a light buzzing radiated through my body. As we painted the letter D, the children were very quiet and seemed to enjoy this new approach to learning. (JH'10)

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