

Strategies/activities that can be introduced in the classroom to increase student well-being and slow down:

Mindfulness – specifically the practice of paying attention in a particular way to the present moment, without judgement – is a strategy that can help students stay focused in class, even when the material gets hard, or they have other things happening in their lives. Including a brief mindfulness practice at the beginning of class can potentially help students stay more focused during class AND help them to build the skill for use in other parts of their lives, too.

- Breathing – choose a controlled breathing exercise and have students practice with you for 3 or 4 rounds. A common one is to inhale to the count of four, hold to the count of six, then exhale to the count of eight.
- 3-2-1 – engage your senses to notice the present moment. Ask students to notice three things they see, two things they hear, and one thing they feel (physically, not emotionally).
- Chime – find a bell or chime that is loud enough for all to hear in your classroom. Ask students to put everything down and focus on the sound of the chime until they can no longer hear it. Ring the chime once, and when they can no longer hear the chime, they should look up and make eye contact with you to signal that they are ready to begin class.

Manipulating perceptions of time – we can't manufacture more hours in the day or minutes in the class period, but we can impact the way we perceive time. Several activities have been associated with an altered perception of time, particularly increasing the sense of "time available." These activities might be especially appropriate if you find that class always feels rushed or if students tend to exhibit impatience, hurrying through activities in order to get on to the next thing.

- Awe – prime your students at the start of class with awe-inspiring images, music or videos. This doesn't have to take more than 60 seconds. You can collect your own set of awe-inspiring media or ask students to contribute to your library.
- Helping others – there is evidence that spending time on others (rather than the self) increases our perceptions of time available. If possible, design group work and other in-class activities such that students are giving their time to another student (or maybe even another class).

Positive Emotions – the experience of so-called positive emotions is hypothesized to broaden our perceptions and increase our ability to build social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills. Giving a small amount of time at the start of class to prime students to be in a positive emotional state may impact their ability to take in the information presented during class.

- Something good from the last 24 hours – ask students to share something good that happened in the last 24 hours. If your class is small, have everyone share. If it is a large class, ask for a few volunteers.

- Emotion cards – keep a stack of positive emotion cards in your bag (examples include: serenity, amusement, interest, joy, love, pride, inspiration, awe, contentment, hope, gratitude). At the start of each class, pull one out at random and ask a few volunteers to share the last time they experienced this emotion. Alternatively, have students pair up and share with each other the last time they experienced the chosen emotion.

Technology management - There isn't a set recommendation regarding the use of electronics in class, but there is some agreement that devices can be distracting both for the student using the device and for those around them. Having a clear policy can help students focus on a single strategy that works for them.

- Laptop notetaking – ask students who choose to take notes on a laptop to sit toward the back of the room to minimize the screen distraction for students sitting around them.
- Device notifications – ask students to turn off all notifications on their devices during class and put the device away (out of view).

References

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