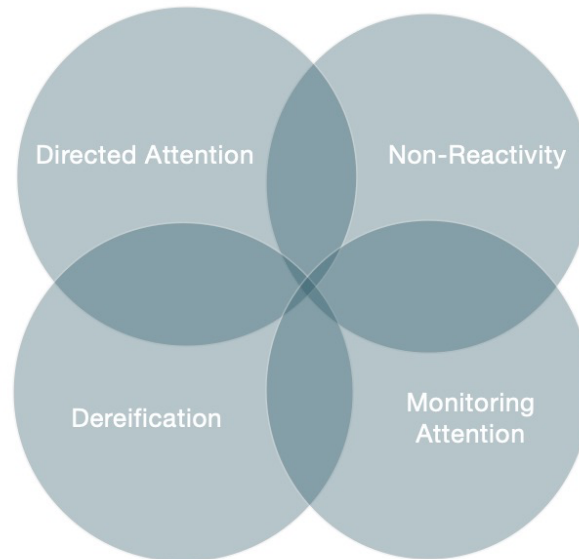


Mindfulness, Learning, and Teacher Wellbeing in the Music Classroom

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Psychological Mechanisms

(Lutz, Jha, Dunne, & Saron, 2015)



Dereification – The phenomenon of thoughts leaving one’s directed attention

Informal Exercises

4-7-8 Breaths (*Vagal Toning Breath*)

S.T.O.P.

Stop

Take a breath

Observe your thoughts and emotions

Proceed intentionally

Engagement with Every-day Activities

Noticing the physical sensations of everyday tasks
(brushing teeth, dishes, walking to class, etc.)

Exercises in the Music Rehearsal or Lesson

- Intentional breathing/stretching with attention to physical sensations
- Directing student's attention to the physical sensations of music making
 - Triangle Listening
 - Mindful Listening (emotional awareness)
 - Narrative -> Emotion -> Musical Elements
- Informal Exercises
 - S.T.O.P
 - 4-7-8 Breaths

Adapt your own!

Applying the Principles

- Anchor their attention in the body,
 - Direct their attention to the physical sensations of the activity.
 - Ask them about the details of that sensation.
 - Cold vs Hot
 - Dull vs sharp (Big vs Small)
 - Tingling? Still? Vibrating?

Triangle/Vibraslap Listening

<u>Mindfulness Concepts</u> Physiological Regulation Embodied Grounding Concentration and Awareness Intentional Action	<u>SEL Competencies</u> Impulse Control Stress Management
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Objective

The goal here is to train the student's ability to focus, particularly on their sense of hearing. This exercise will not only help them be better listeners in the musical sense, but also strengthens their ability to direct and hold their attention in general.

Notes

This exercise begins with a triangle, but once the students are comfortable with the exercise, you can change what instrument you create the sound with the bring variety. Percussion instruments with a long decay are preferable because the sound after the attack is uncontrolled which bring a sense of narrative to the exercise. The Vibraslap is a particularly interesting option because, if played and suspended in a certain way, it will noticeably crescendo a couple of seconds after the initial attack, which is a fun surprise for the students.

If your students are doing exceptionally well with this exercise, you can have them continue to openly monitor the room for any sounds after the instrument has stopped vibrating. You can slowly stretch that time out to further train the student's ability to focus their brains.

Script

Maintaining an upright and dignified posture and with your eyes closed, I would like you to give attention to the sound that this triangle makes and quietly raise your hand when you can no longer hear it.

Strike the Triangle and wait for all (or most) hands to raise. Congratulate them on a job well done and move on.

Listening with Narrative

<u>Mindfulness Concepts</u> Concentration and Awareness Cognitive and Emotional Reframing	<u>SEL Competencies</u> Impulse Control Self-Discipline Evaluating Reflecting Perspective-Taking Empathy Identifying Emotions
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Objective

This kind of listening exercise is meant to deepen our student’s ability to hear and understand music.

Notes

This exercise is an adaptation of the script and principles that William Anderson used in his study “Mindful Music Listening Instruction Increases Listening Sensitivity and Enjoyment” published in NafME’s Action journal.¹ Instead of, merely, “Let’s listen to this piece of music”, our instructions have gained 2 elements: mindful consideration of the inner experience and connecting those inner experiences to the musical elements that contributed to them.

Script

We are going to listen to some music and I want you to pretend it is telling you a story and try to remember it. Your story may be completely different other student’s, and that is okay. Make sure you notice how the story changes through the beginning, middle, and end. For example, if your story is about a person, were they calm, happy, or sad at the beginning? Did they change in the middle? Did they change even more at the end of the music?

Secondarily, what happened in the music to make you feel the way you did or imagine the story you imagined? What about the volume (loud/soft), tempo (slow/fast), timbre (dark/bright), contour (smooth/jagged), etc. affected your story or feelings?

Play a piece/excerpt of music. When the piece/excerpt is over lead a discussion about the student’s stories/feelings. Challenge them to connect the stories/feelings to a particular musical element in the music they just heard.

¹ William Todd Anderson, “Mindful Music Listening Instruction Increases Listening Sensitivity and Enjoyment,” *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* 34, no. 3 (2016): 48–55. <https://doi.org/10.1177/8755123314567905>.

Cold Air/Warm Air

<u>Mindfulness Concepts</u> Physiological Regulation Embodied Grounding Concentration and Awareness Intentional Action	<u>SEL Competencies</u> Impulse Control Stress Management
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Objective

The objective here is to not only get the students to practice diaphragmatic breathing (it is assumed that they already understand this), but also to down-regulate their sympathetic nervous system, which calms the body and mind and reduces affective interference in cognition.

Notes

This exercise is similar to the 4-4-8 Breathing but with the added element of a particular object of orientation. All of the same focus on grounding the students in the sensations of their bodies applies and should be encouraged throughout the exercise.

Script

Roll your shoulders up, back, then down and hold that dignified and relaxed upright posture. I'd like you to hold one of your hands up in front of your face with your palm facing the side. Now open your mouth to an "O" vowel and bring the side of your hand up to your mouth. With your hand in place begin taking deep, diaphragmatic breath and notice all of the sensations created in, on, and around your hand as you do so. Particularly the coolness of the air as you breath in and the warmth of the air as you breath out.

Let them do this a few times on their own.

Now, let's try it together. We'll breath in for 3 beats and out for 6.

Establishing the pulse with snaps/taps, engage in the exercise with them and demonstrate the exercise as clearly as possible. As they are going through the pattern, help to direct their attention with reminders such as: *Notice the sensations on and around your hand. Can you feel the air moving past your knuckles/lips? Can you feel the warmth of your out-breath on your hand? Can you feel your clothes moving against your skin? How is gravity stretching your body around your breath? Try to make every breath in deeper than the one before.*