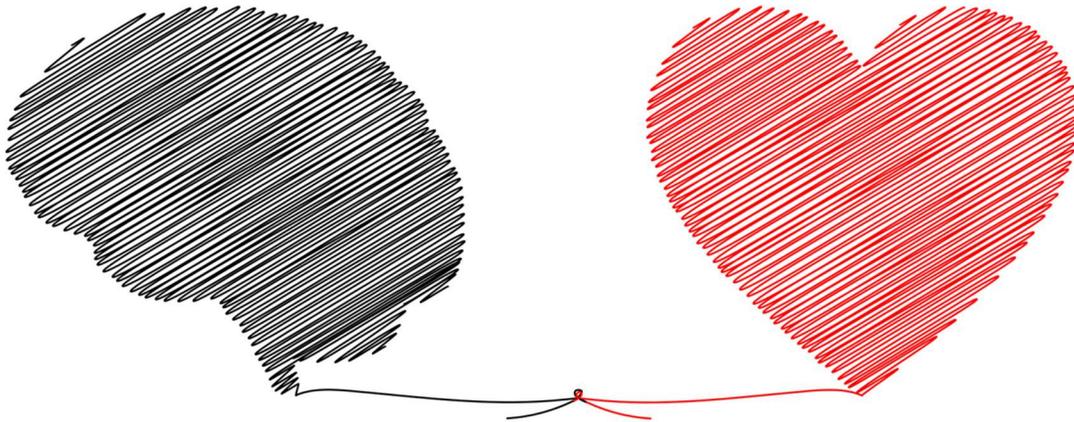


Blog – March 2022

...and breathe...



A few weeks ago, I was asked to open a zoom meeting for the weekly [Meditation Focused on Academics & Life Challenges](#) session. It's facilitated by Scott Pope who is a trained Psychotherapist from Student Counselling, Health and Well-being. I have been curious about attending as a participant, but it has never worked out and something always got in the way. Because I was already in the meeting, I thought it's a good chance to stay around for the experience. Scott talked about the importance of breathing and focusing on relaxing each part of your body through a technique called progressive relaxation. I found it fascinating that something as simple as breathing, is so often overlooked or pushed back. Sure, we all breathe all day, but do we ever just pause and focus on breathing as a process and how it affects our overall stress levels and in turn, academic achievements?

In a recent Harvard Business Review [article](#), the authors talk about two studies that were carried out at Yale and University of Arizona. The first study compared the impacts on health from three different wellbeing practices on groups of participants. They found that those who practiced breath meditation techniques “experienced the greatest mental health, social connectedness, positive emotions, stress levels, depression, and mindfulness benefits”ⁱ. In the second study (from the same article), researchers found immediate and long-term positive impacts on mood and stress in those participants who practice the breathing meditation technique. Amazingly, the same technique proved to reduce stress levels within a week (and maintained a beneficial influence in the long run) for Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans dealing with trauma.

At this time of the academic year, it is completely normal to feel overwhelmed and carry anxiety around. What is important is to make sure it does not get the better of you. Planning and setting goals for projects and work comes hand in hand with taking a few minutes to focus on your body. Equally, utilising the support services on offer is as important. Coincidentally, York University is currently running the [Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey](#) and you have until 18th of March to have your say on how York can improve its health and well-being initiatives (and win an iPhone 13 and other prizes).

This month, ACMAPS is hosting several [events](#) to help you with your exams and looking beyond graduation. We also have several connection events for mature and transfer students as well as student-parents. Our [mature student peer-mentors](#) are available by appointment as well as during drop-in session and can help you with specific questions or just to have a friendly chat! And of course, the weekly *Meditation Focused on Academics & Life Challenges* is open for drop-ins, so I hope you get a chance to experience it yourself!

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<https://hbr.org/2020/09/research-why-breathing-is-so-effective-at-reducing-stress>