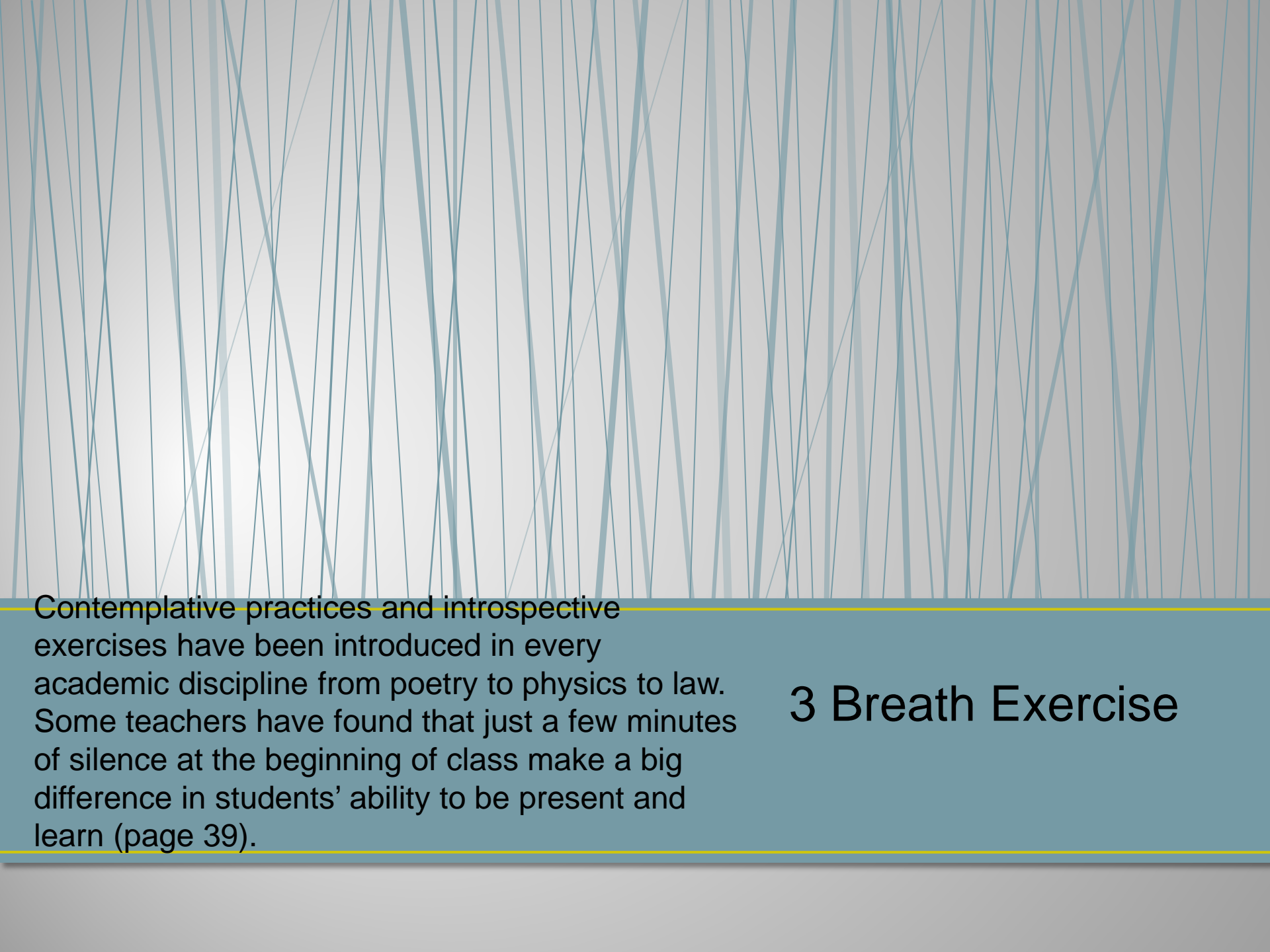


# Introspective & Contemplative Practices Improves Student Satisfaction and Deepens Understanding

Kathleen A. Bishop, MS, PhD  
Health Sciences Dept.



Contemplative practices and introspective exercises have been introduced in every academic discipline from poetry to physics to law. Some teachers have found that just a few minutes of silence at the beginning of class make a big difference in students' ability to be present and learn (page 39).

## 3 Breath Exercise

This session will introduce the attendees to the recent research, validity, and relevance of introspective and contemplative practices in the classroom.

It will demonstrate how the use of contemplative practices can help the students increase their concentration, focus, attention, and retention.

Doing so can help them to feel more connected to the learning process and the material.

It is no longer simply a “learning for the test” but learning for life’s intricacies and challenges while in school and after graduation.

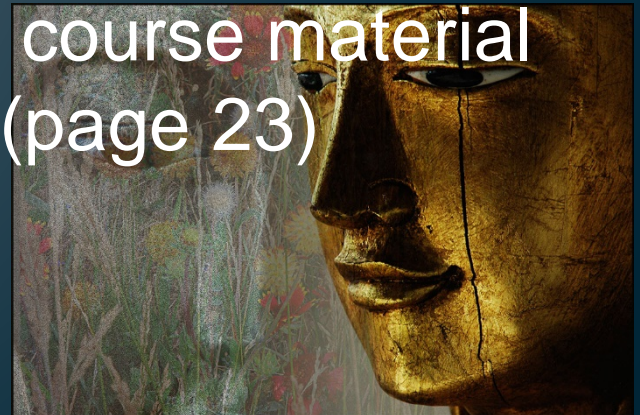


# *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education*

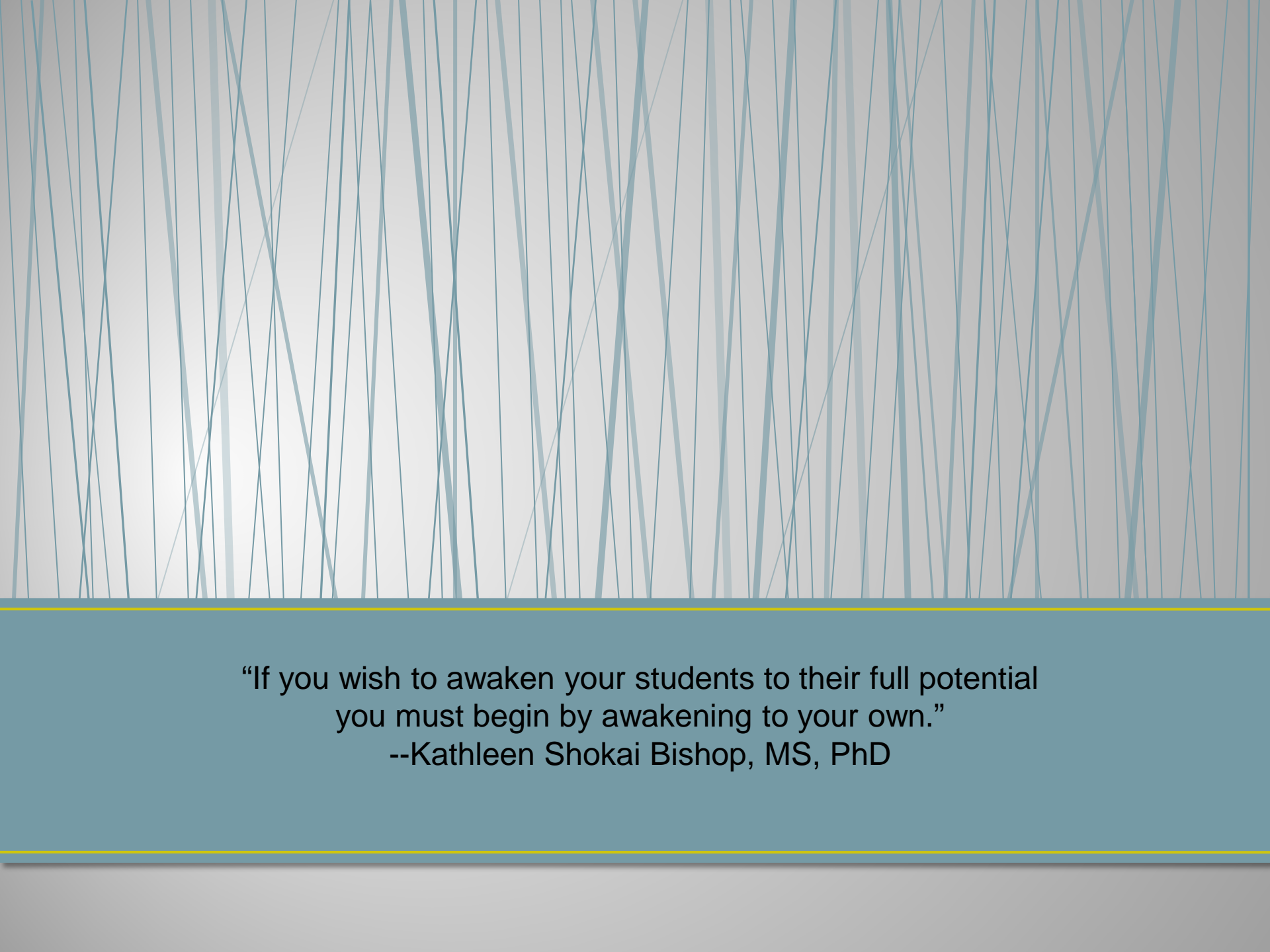
Daniel P. Barbezat and Mirabai Bush

With regard to the scientific research done on meditation, these categories are

1. Increased concentration and attention
2. Increased mental health and psychological well-being
3. Increased connection, generosity, and loving kindness
4. Deepened understanding of the course material
5. Increased creativity and insight (page 23)

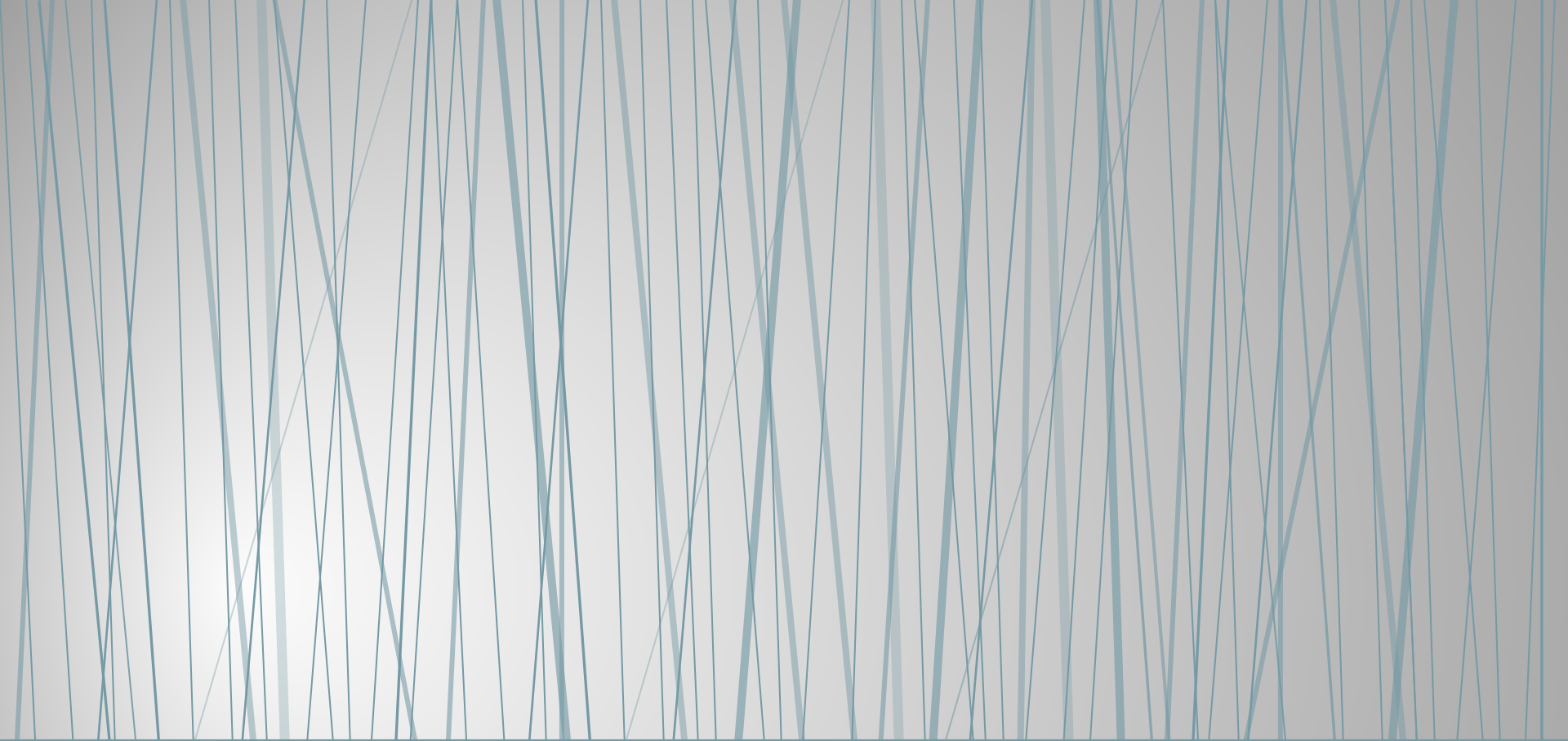




The background of the slide features a series of thin, vertical, light blue lines of varying heights and positions, creating a textured, rain-like effect. A solid teal horizontal band spans the width of the slide, positioned in the lower half. The quote is centered within this band.

“If you wish to awaken your students to their full potential  
you must begin by awakening to your own.”

--Kathleen Shokai Bishop, MS, PhD

The background of the slide features a series of vertical lines in various shades of blue and grey, creating a textured, rain-like effect. These lines vary in thickness and opacity, some appearing as thin, light lines and others as thicker, darker bands. The overall composition is minimalist and modern.

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*Research has shown that meditation seems to support changes in brain activity that were previously thought to be hardwired in humans and thus unchangeable (page 24).*

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# Research shows...

- In a series of carefully constructed experiments, Shauna Shapiro and colleagues have shown that students exposed to eight to ten weeks of meditation practices significantly decreased their levels of anxiety and depression (even during especially stressful finals periods) compared to carefully selected control groups (page 27).



# Research shows...

- The assumption that meditation simply induces a state of relaxation is “dead wrong,” says Tonya Jacobs (Jacobs et al., 2011). Brain-imaging studies suggest that it triggers active processes within the brain and can cause physical changes to the structure of regions important to learning, memory, emotion regulation, and cognitive processing (page 29).





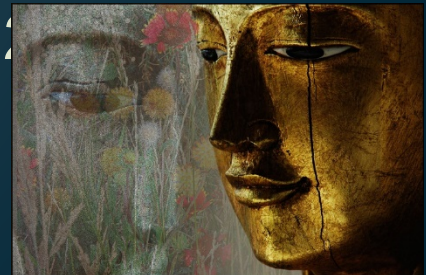
The top half of the image features an abstract background composed of numerous thin, vertical lines in various shades of blue and grey, creating a textured, rain-like effect. A solid blue horizontal band spans the width of the image, serving as a background for the text.

# The Color Blue

From: *How to Train a Wild Elephant*, by Jan Chosen Bays, M.D.

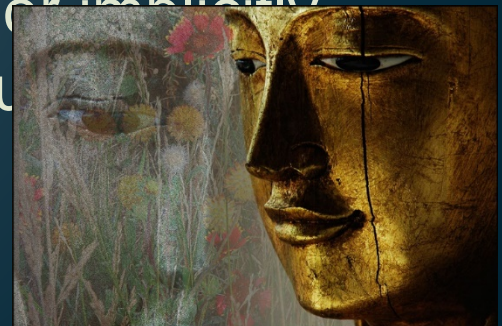
# It's not just about research...

- Students that are skillfully instructed in the practice of mindfulness as part of their school day (even when instrumentally construed), are receiving “deep teachings,” some of which can be elaborated as follows: (a) attending the present-moment inner experience is an educationally worthwhile activity, (b) our inner-world is a meaningful arena, (c) meaning might exist here and now and not only in the future in which a certain educational aim might be achieved. These, I suggest, constitute a substantial re-construction of what we have been accustomed to refer to as “education” (Ergas :



# It's not just about research...continued

- Attention is interpreted here as a “T-junction’ for it can only be oriented in two ways: either in here (to our interiority) or out there (to the “world”). Any act of teaching in the classroom is inevitably based on a teacher’s deliberation between asking students to attend in here or asking them to attend out there moment after moment. This constitutes the level coined here as meta-pedagogy—the scaffold of all pedagogies (e.g., asking questions, writing on the board, reading, writing)—and a fundamental teaching, that either explicitly or implicitly, tells the student where meaning is to be found.



# It's not just about research...continued

- The meta-pedagogical scaffold of contemplative practices, now introduced in schools, deliberately engages students with in here and now. By so doing contemplative practices are introducing an alternative curricular deliberation; one that inevitably challenges the very concept of “curriculum” as a “course of study” and its implications to our conception of life-meaning and where we ought to look for it (in here and/or out there). Such observations however, can only come in to view, as we seriously examine “education” from the lo  
attention is actually deployed—the studer





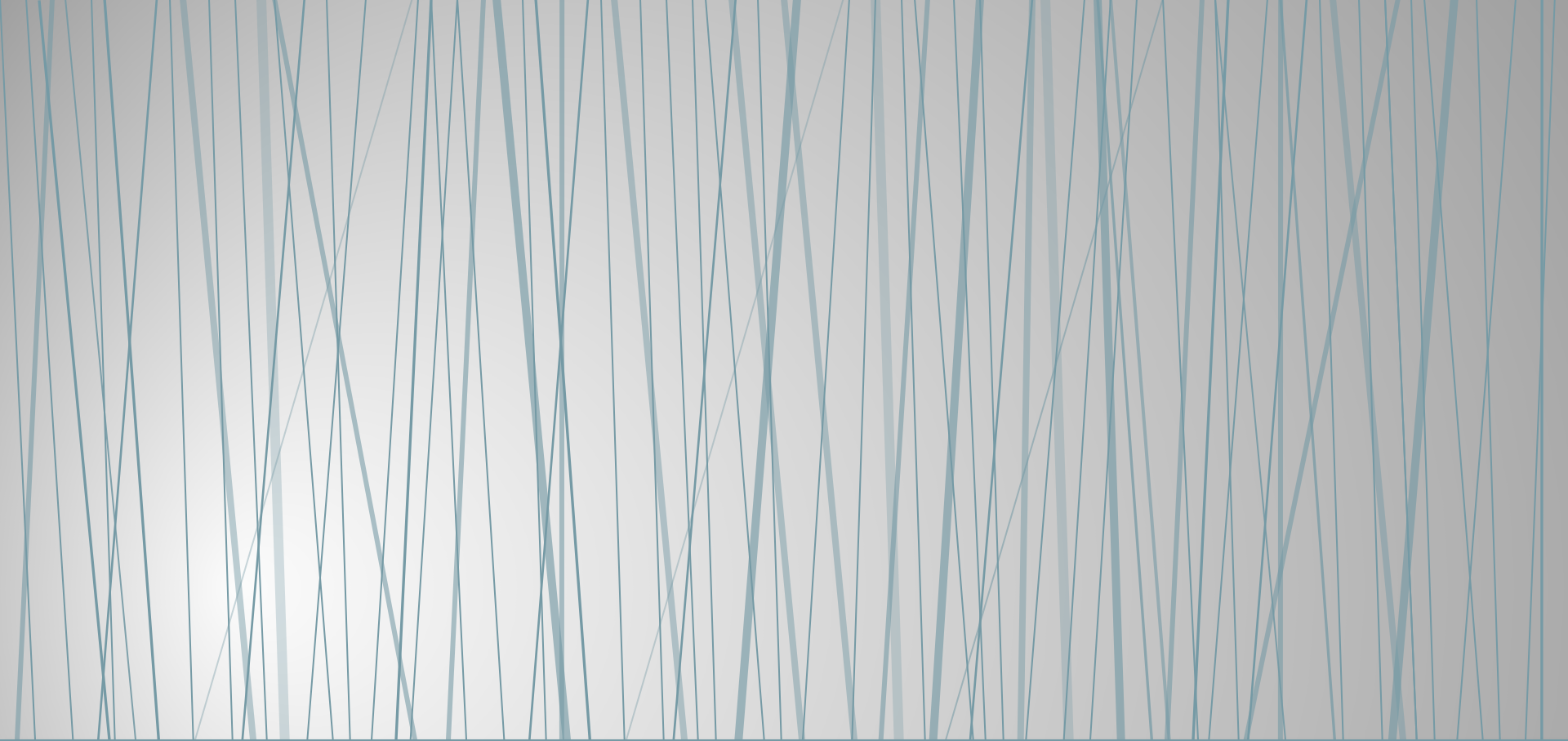
# It's not just about research...continued

- From this first-person perspective, mindfulness practice in its common rendition is not about science, stress-reduction or higher achievements. It is about dwelling *in the here and now*, and gradually realizing that there is no place “better” than *now*. Paradoxically, this is a radical critique of the very essence of the “curriculum,” which inevitably proposes that reaching the “end” of the “the course of study” will in effect bring us to a “better” time and place (page 3).



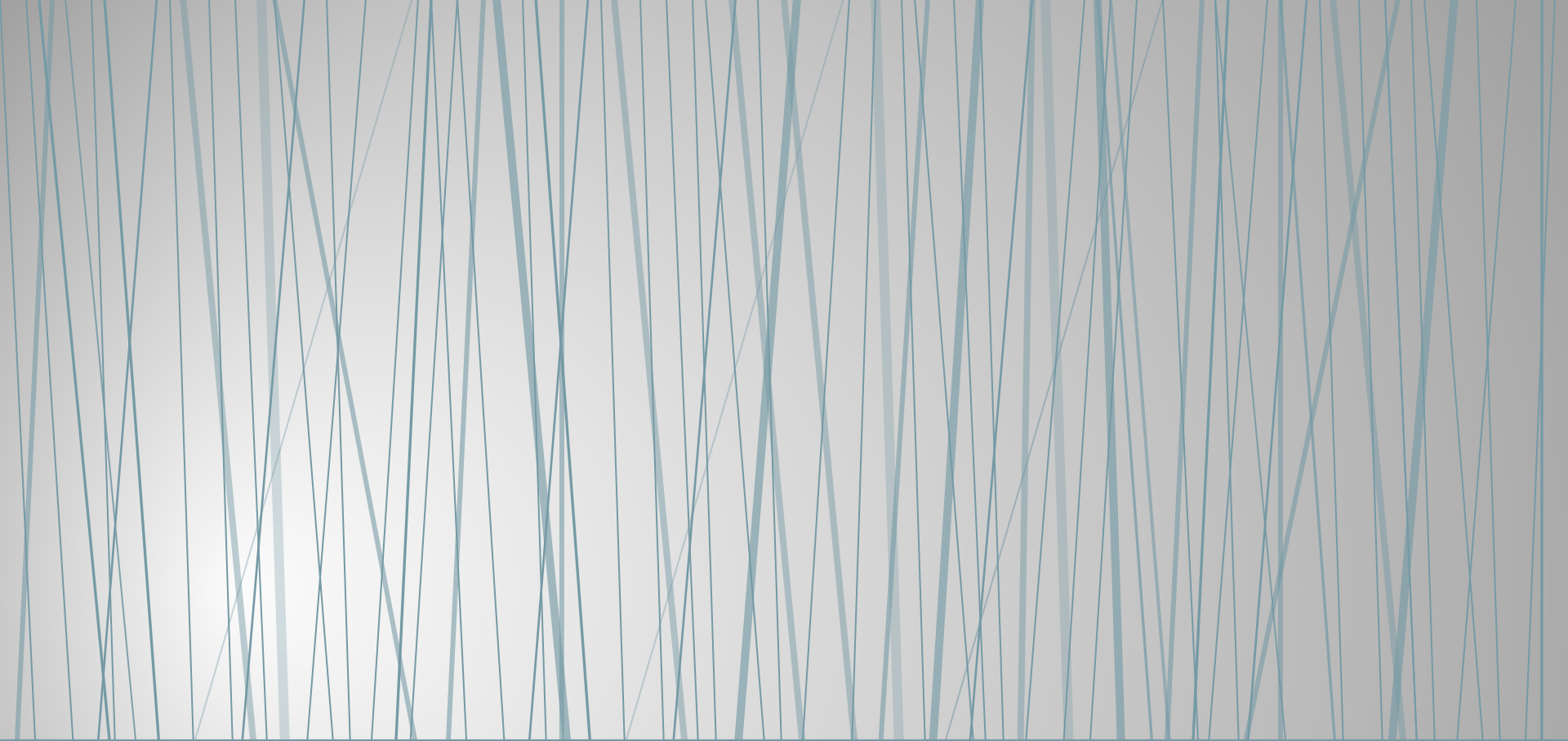
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So how do we integrate these ideas into our classes???



Have students just write what is happening here and now, paying attention to what they see, hear, touch, and think while letting go of any other ideas or thoughts from the past. At first begin each sentence with the words “here and now” and then for longer assignments begin each paragraph with the words “here and now.”

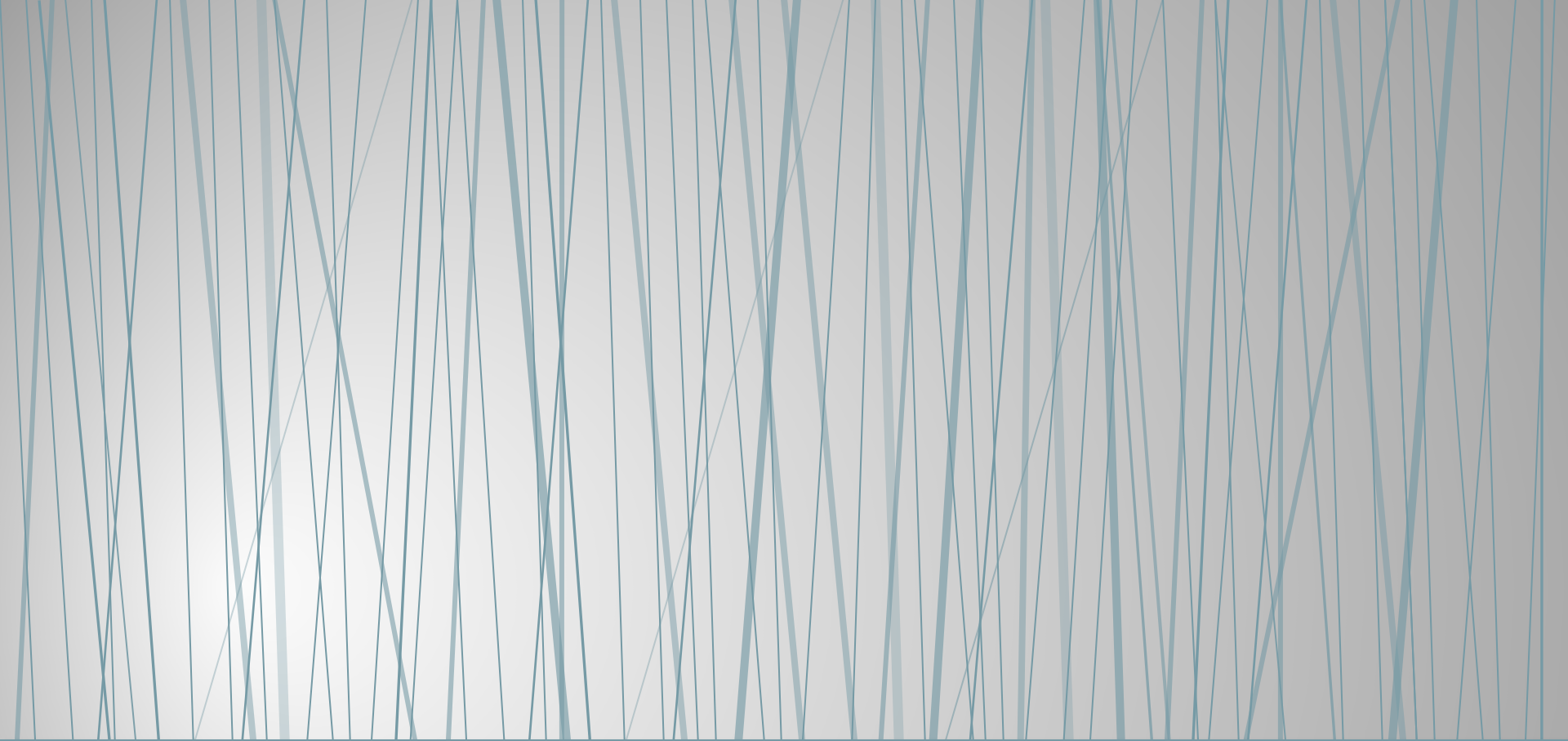
## Mindful Writing Exercise



Doing each of these things mindfully means doing them without doing something else at the same time such as reading, writing, texting, watching TV, listening to music etc. You are fully focused on the task at hand with all of your 5 senses.

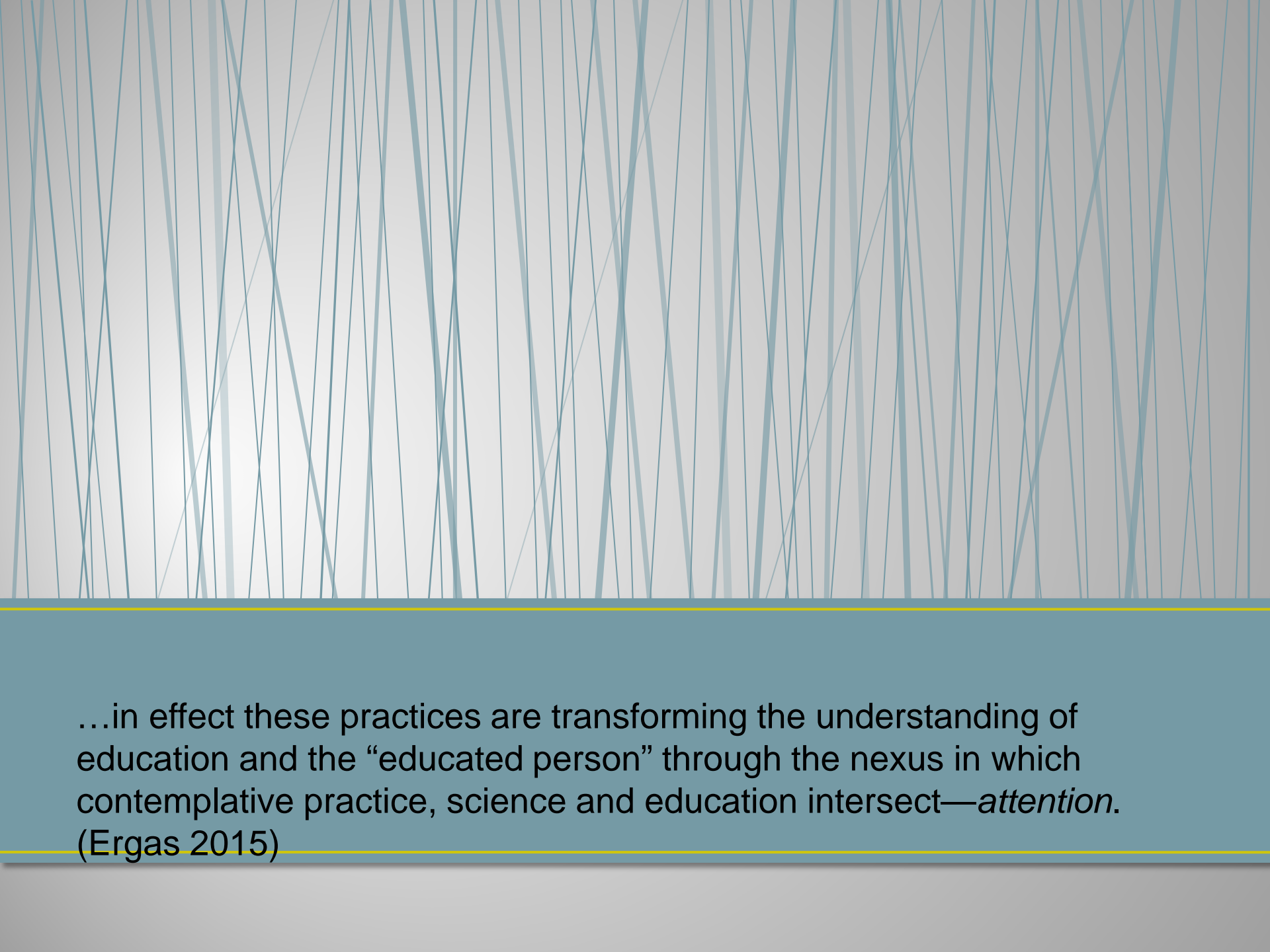
**Mindful eating (candy exercise), walking, sitting, listening, loving kindness, giving, studying, writing, etc.**





Ask your students to silently wish well for someone they do not know—strangers while traveling—and themselves. When they do this the students will be surprised to realize that wishing well for someone felt good, as did the idea that someone might be wishing them well. They reported feeling warmer and more open from being generous.

Wishing Well  
for Others

The background of the slide features a series of thin, vertical, light blue lines of varying heights and positions, creating a textured, rain-like effect. A solid, medium-blue horizontal band spans the width of the slide, serving as a background for the text.

...in effect these practices are transforming the understanding of education and the “educated person” through the nexus in which contemplative practice, science and education intersect—*attention*.  
(Ergas 2015)

A black and white photograph of a misty forest. Tall, thin trees stand in the background, their trunks partially obscured by a thick layer of fog or mist. The foreground is filled with dense, low-lying vegetation, including tall grasses and small shrubs. The overall atmosphere is serene and ethereal. The text "Be here now" is overlaid in the lower right quadrant in a white, serif font.

Be here now



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Pictures: Permission given by Mitch Doshin Cantor, my teacher  
“Thatch” and “upaya-gold-buddha”

<http://listeningwiththeeye.squarespace.com/galleries>

<http://listeningwiththeeye.squarespace.com/galleries/buddhist/>

# Links

- Ergas, 2015 The Deeper Teachings of Mindfulness, third round  
<http://huji.academia.edu/OrenErgas>
- <https://acmhe.memberclicks.net/>
- [https://acmhe.memberclicks.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=26&Itemid=85](https://acmhe.memberclicks.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=26&Itemid=85)
- <http://cndls.georgetown.edu/teachtoconnect/>
- <http://www.mindfuled.org/>
- [http://www.ehow.com/list\\_7771028\\_zen-decorating-ideas-office.html](http://www.ehow.com/list_7771028_zen-decorating-ideas-office.html)
- <http://floridazen.com/>
- [www.alaska-zen.org/zen-practice/how-to-do-zazen](http://www.alaska-zen.org/zen-practice/how-to-do-zazen)
- <http://listeningwiththeeye.squarespace.com/galleries/black-and-white>
- [www.silverNightingale.com](http://www.silverNightingale.com) Sarabande, Solo Flue Meditations, Laura Sue Wilansky, The Silver Nightingale, Siciliano from Sonata #2 in Eb Major (J.S. Bach)