

# **If the Buddha Walked Mindfully On Stage: Actor Empowerment and Character Embodiment**

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## Background/aim:

Introducing and engaging college students in mindfulness can be a learning and teaching partnership among faculty and across disciplines. This presentation will demonstrate the journey to engage in and teach aspects of mindfulness by designing a first-year freshman class incorporating mindfulness for the theatre department at Chapman University, a private university ranked 5th in the U.S. News and World Report for the Regional West Best Colleges. The First-Year Foundations program serves 1695 students and creates a multi-discipline approach to increasing information literacy and critical thinking skills. Exploring Buddha-nature and mindfulness to see how its teachings and practices can be used to examine, discuss, and analyze character struggles and triumphs from dramatic literature and demonstrate its usefulness in acting were introduced in order to support these critical thinking and creative proficiencies. For the intention of the class, mindfulness is defined as the practice of cultivating present moment awareness without judgement to the experiences that are arising inwardly as well as outwardly. Finding ways to include a strong personal practice as faculty and establish faculty conversations provide a starting point from which to explore pedagogical methods using mindfulness more deeply and authentically within the classroom and its potential and expansion into multi-discipline content and knowledge. Creating an imaginative way of introducing mindfulness in play analysis and performance technique can lead to mindfulness initiatives and multi-discipline inclusion for a fuller future integration in support of student academic success and well-being.

Summary/Integration: Future integration of Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) may include examining classroom pedagogy by using mindfulness as a teaching method, underpinning delivery of a classroom experience that is more deeply aware and open to its instructional content. Using various MBIs and assessing its impact on student learning, increasing information literacy and critical thinking skills could be a benefit, supporting overall student success and well-being.