



Mindfulness in a  
First Year

Experience Course:  
*Students Who  
Manage Stress Well,  
Manage College Well*

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# Our First Year Experience course description:

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- This course provides the skills, knowledge, and abilities for academic persistence and performance development, as well as the psychosocial influencers on college and career success. In addition to decision making, critical thinking, study, oral and written communication skills, topics include educational goal setting, college orientation, successful academic behaviors, and career and life planning. Emphasis is placed on cross cultural awareness, personal and social responsibility, resource availability, and college policies and procedures.
- This course is highly recommended for first-year students seeking an Associate's degree.
- Fulfills open and liberal arts electives.
- Service-learning is recommended.

# Mindfulness serves two purposes:

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## Emotional

- Who am I?
- Why am I here?

## Physical

- Activates relaxation response



Mind Full, or Mindful?

# Major topics:

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## Academic

- Why college?
- Stress management
- Public speaking/test taking anxiety
- Setting goals
- Career exploration

## Mindfulness thread

- Story of Buddha, self-awareness
- Nervous systems, breathing
- Mind/body connection
- Visualization
- Staying healthy beyond college



# Why are you in college?

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- The story of Siddhartha
- College students can learn from Siddhartha's journey by recognizing that everyone has to struggle a bit to find out who they are...and that all the answers are already inside us all



# Assignment:



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- Students learn about Siddhartha and his long and complicated journey towards self-awareness
- Students write a short paper about the journey that led them to college
  - What does ‘college student’ mean to them?
  - What obstacles do they need to overcome?
  - What motivates them to continue?





# Stress management:

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- A benefit of mindfulness can be the activation of the relaxation response as well as mental/emotional well being
- Knowing about the body's stress response is essential to combating the negative effects of stress

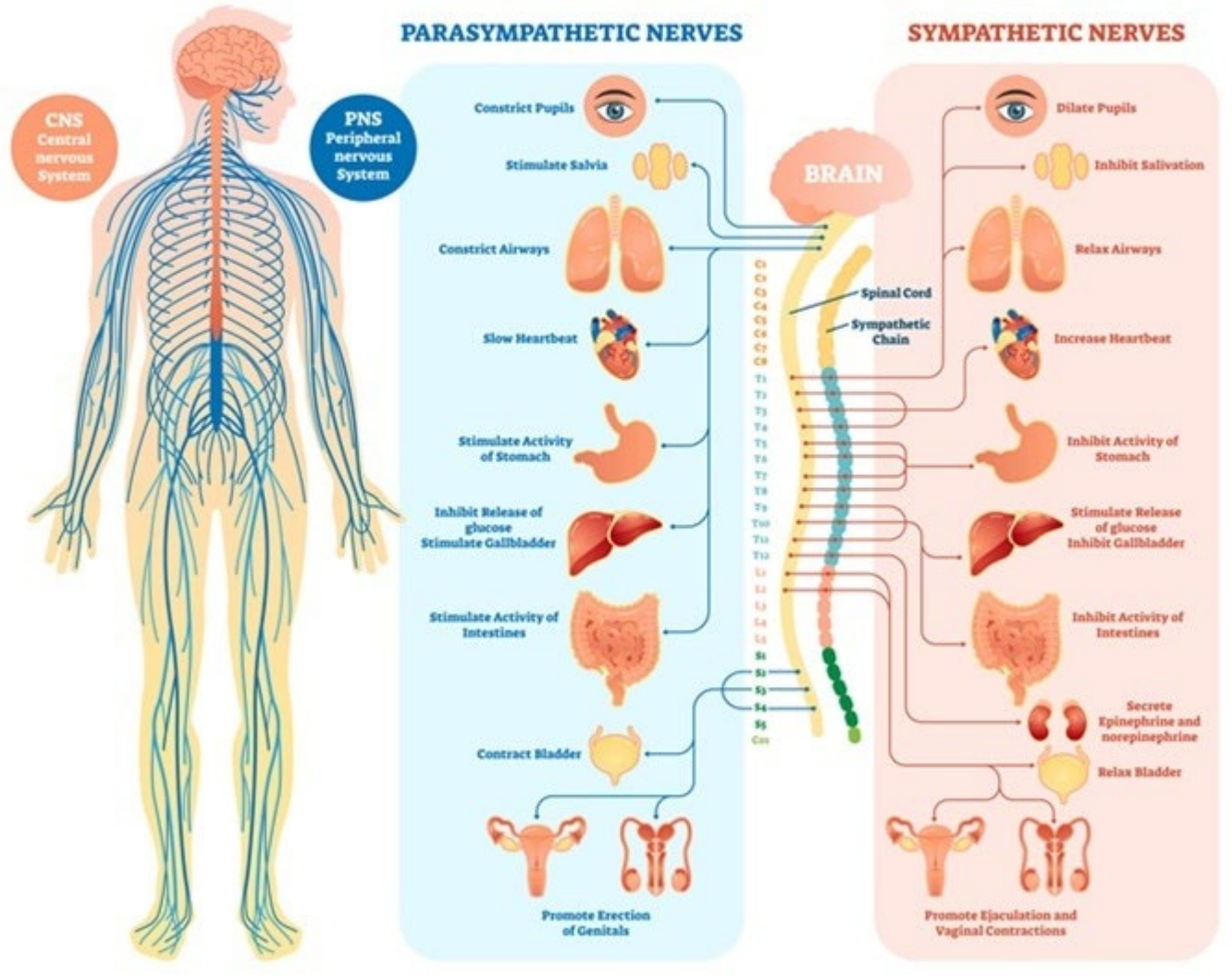
# Assignment:

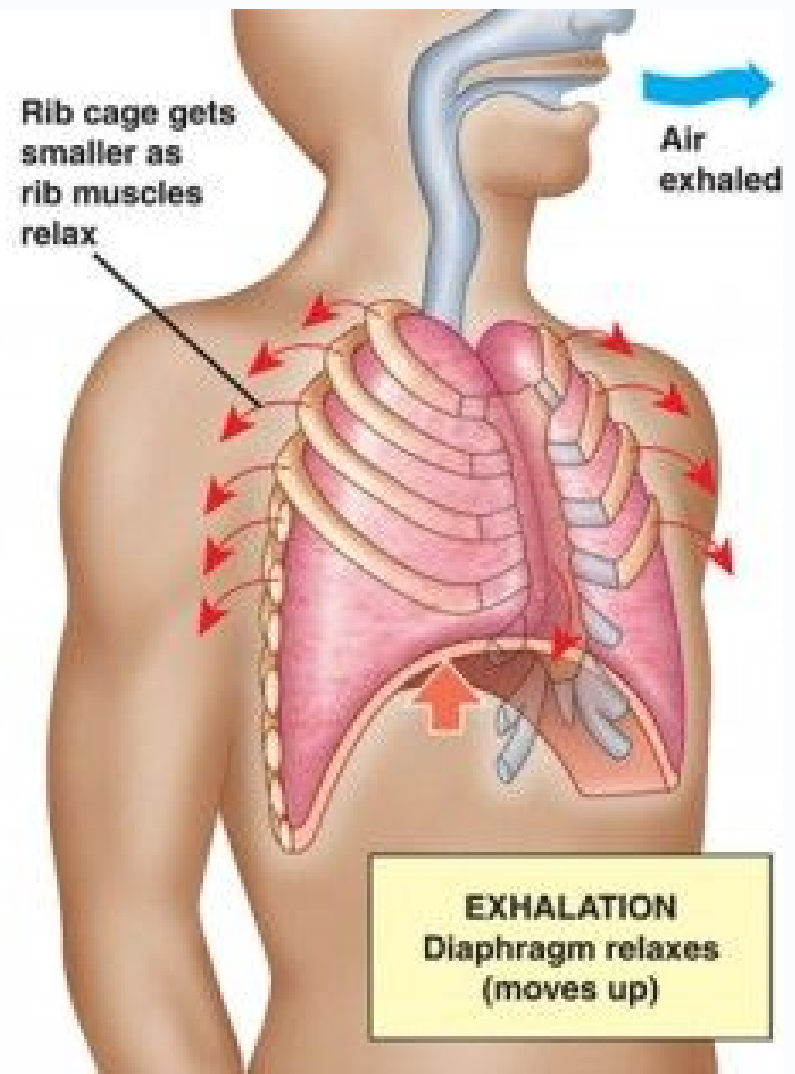
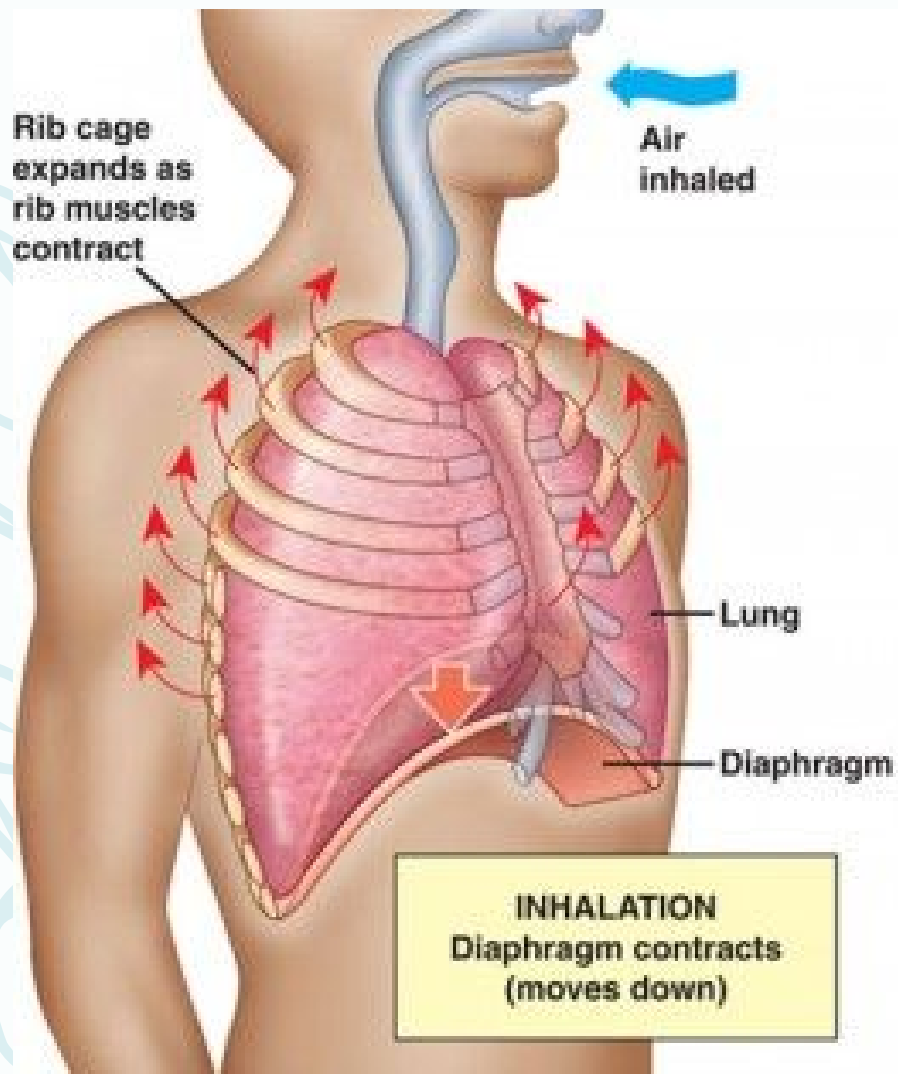


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- Students learn about the stress response and the nervous systems in the body
- Students also learn how breathing exercises can be the easiest way to manage stress symptoms
- We practice 4-7-8 breathing in class
- Students initiate a home practice of breathing meditation and journal about their experience

# HUMAN NERVOUS SYSTEM









# Public speaking/test taking anxiety

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- Recognizing the mind/body connection
- Understanding the control we have over our minds and bodies

# Assignment:



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- Revisit the stress response, including the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems
- Students write about how/if the mind controls the body/the body controls the mind, giving examples
- Watch Amy Cuddy TED Talk: Your body language may shape who you are
- Discussion on how the body affects the mind
- Watch Gen Kelsang Nyema's TED Talk: Happiness is all in your mind
- Discussion on how the mind affects your life
- Students write a paper or give a presentation on how to use this information in their own lives









# Setting goals

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- Using positive visualization exercises to help students see themselves as successful

# Assignment:

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- Students journal about their lives 30 years in the future: *what will have made them happy?*
- Then students write out a plan for the steps they need to take to get from *now* to *30 years from now*
- Students indicate short-, mid-, and long-term goals
- For five minutes students sit with eyes closed, meditating on, or visualizing, themselves completing each goal and living a happy life in 30 years
- Students continue their home practice to include this visualization exercise





# Career exploration

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- What career best serves your emotional and mental and thus physical health?
- Knowing how to stay healthy and mindful will lead you to choose careers that support that goal and/or keep you healthy in a fast-paced, stressful career
- understanding the link between stress and health will help you avoid burnout or stress-related illness



# Assignment:

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- Students research a potential career through the lens of mindfulness:
  - Will their chosen career make them happy?
  - Is happiness a legitimate goal in choosing a career?
  - What can they do to maintain health in that career?
  - What can they do to manage their stress in their chosen career?

# What students have to say:

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“Mindfulness helps open your heart and mind to different strategies while being in college. As a college student, there is a lot of stress that can build up.”

“I believe that mindfulness can help me because it helps you get your work done because you focus on getting one thing done at a time and helps you manage everything you need to complete whether that's studying for a test or meeting a deadline or showing up for class. I also believe that it helps you keep a good mindset and gets rid of built up stress and anxiety.”

“I try breathing in and out while I close my eyes while staying peaceful”

“If I need some time to release my stress the last and favorite thing I love to do is hang out with my family or some friends to help ease my mind.”

“Sometimes taking some time to breathe and not think about school can calm yourself so when its time to go back into 'school mood' I can be ready to tackle any problem I may face.”

# 4-7-8 breathing

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# Visualization exercise

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- Imagine yourself in 10 years
- What will make you happy?
- Make a list of how to get from *now* to *10 years from now*.
- Close your eyes and visualize yourself in 10 years, enjoying that happiness

Thank you!

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