

Buffalo Hide Academy:

April 2020

Distance Learning Spotlight: Wellness Class with Charlie and Chris

April marked the first full month of distance learning. Our two counselors, Charlie Speicher and Chris Lewis, took this opportunity to create assignments and projects in order to continue providing services on both the academic and social-emotional health fronts.

Below are two assignments taken from the Wellness Google Classroom. The first is centered around mindfulness practice and the second is an introductory assignment on PONGO Poetry:

Hello BHA Student! This week we will be building upon the exercises from the last three weeks. So far, our focus has been on the following:

- 1. How mindfulness can give us back our power. It can help us learn when to listen to our mind, and when to disobey it!*
- 2. How practicing mindfulness is like having an instruction manual for our mind, that it can teach us how to use our mind better.*
- 3. And how mindfulness can help us to understand our minds better so we can be happier people.*

*In addition, we've also been discussing how Mindfulness can make our brains stronger, even changing their shape and how they work. Different studies show how the brain grows and changes shape and function. This phenomenon of our brain's malleability is called "**neuroplasticity**." We've talked about that quite a bit during my Thursday seminars throughout the year.*

When we use our attention, we're training our brain. We spend a lot of time learning information or exercising our bodies in school, but we don't spend time developing our minds themselves. Mindfulness can teach us how to focus and pay attention better. We usually train our minds to jump from one thing to another. Mindfulness of sound is one way to strengthen our ability to focus and pay attention.

The basic concept of neuroplasticity is that our brains can get stronger and grow, kind of like muscles. Their shape or structure changes, and the very way they function can change. In other words, our brains are malleable. That means that you can bend or shape something, kind of like clay or soft plastic. The word for this property of our brains is called neuroplasticity, and that's a very important Wellness concept to understand. In other words, it's like saying that we don't have to be happy with the brains we've been given if we don't think they function well enough for us.....we can change the structure of the brain and it's functionality by giving it exercise!

One of the ways our brain works is by sending signals down pathways called neural networks. When you do something a lot, the brain remembers it. It's kind of like walking through a wide open meadow over and over again; soon, a trail develops. Or, you can think about it like taking a new route to school or a relative's house: Once you've done it a few times you remember how to go that way. In our brain, if we do something a lot, it gets etched in. In neuroscience they say, "Neurons that fire together wire together."

So, we spend a lot of time learning information in school, developing intelligence, and strengthening our bodies through sports or exercise. But we don't spend much time learning how to use our mind itself. Has anyone ever heard a teacher say, "Pay attention." But how many of those same teachers taught you how to pay attention? Right.

How many people find it hard to pay attention sometimes? I know I do. Sometimes it feels like I can't zero in on any given thought, because they're all coming at me at once. Kind of like when you're trying to read a passage for homework, and you keep reading the same paragraph over and over? Our minds can wander a lot, because we haven't taught them how to rest and stay with one single thing.

In fact, most of what we are doing each day is training them not to stay on one thing. Our cell phones, texting, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok, and definitely video games all train the mind to move quickly and jump around from one thing to another. We're strengthening those patterns in our minds. Mindfulness is mental training, and one of the things it does is strengthen our brain's ability to focus. So let's do some practice.

Today we're going to use sound to help strengthen our minds.

Practice

Let's start the same way we did last time, with our posture and you guys all imagining the sound of the bell (picture me in a circle with all of us seated, my beard glistening, as I gently ring a Tibetan bell.....) For the sake of this exercise, however, find a consistent sound you can hear right now and focus on it. It could be a fan, a heater, a fire, just find a sound and stay with it.....

- *Let your body sit in a comfortable and relatively upright position in your chair. Remember, you don't have to be uptight, but just a sense that the spine is extended upward. Feet are on the ground, hands in your lap.*
- *If it feels all right to you, gently close your eyes, or else gaze down at the ground.*
- *When you hear the sound you are focusing on, listen completely. Put all your attention into hearing the sound from the beginning, through the middle, and all the way to the end. When you can't hear the sound at all anymore, quietly raise your hand.*
- *Notice how you feel right now.*
- *Try to notice the relaxing effects of gravity. Bring awareness to that downward force that's always here in the body. Let your body get heavy; feel the points that are touching the ground, and let them take the weight of your body.*
- *If you like, you can say "relax, relax" a few times silently to yourself. Let any tension in your body drain down and out.*
- *Take a few deep breaths, and when you exhale, see if you can feel any relaxation or ease. As your body settles, become aware of the whole body sitting.*
- *In a moment, I'm going to focus on your sound again. Keeping your eyes closed, let all your attention go to the sound, listening from the first moment as closely as you can until the moment it ends. See if your mind wanders or any thoughts come while you're listening.*
- *Notice how you feel. Keeping your eyes closed, see if you can notice any other sounds. Just let your attention be wide open, listening to all the sounds around you.*
- *When you're ready, you can let your eyes open slowly. Notice how you feel. Notice how it feels in your room right now.*

Discussion Questions

What was the sound you chose to focus on? Were you able to notice when you stopped hearing your chosen sound? What was that like?

Did your mind wander while listening to your sound, maybe thinking about something else? Were you able to bring it back?

What other sounds did you hear at the end?

*Hey BHA Fam, it's Chris! I hope that each one of you is doing well and staying healthy. Let me start by saying that we miss you guys! Remember, we are here to support you in any way we can during these uncertain times. If anything comes up, you can contact Charlie or I from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. **The phone number is 406-885-4094.***

Over the course of the past four weeks, the wellness classroom has focused on mindfulness based exercises with Charlie. I'm not sure about all of you, but this class really helped to slow down my "busy" mind and focus on what was happening with my current thoughts and emotions. We are now going to shift gears just a bit, and attempt to turn my expressive arts class into an online google classroom. My guess is that we are going to be able to do so just fine.



What are the expressive arts?

The expressive arts incorporate various artistic mediums (painting, drawing, music, collaging, writing, etc.) that allow us to tell our stories and make meaning out of our thoughts, experiences, and emotions. One of the coolest aspects of the expressive arts is that we focus on the process of creating more so than the finished product.

Key Points

- Expressive Arts is for all of us. We were all born with an innate ability to create.
- Expressive Arts does not require us to be an "artist" in the traditional sense.
- Expressive Arts is about working with our creative process in order to tell a story.
- Expressive Arts have the ability to promote healthy change in our lives.
- Expressive Arts is not limited to painting. We can dance, sing, write, or collage!
- Much like meditation, the expressive arts are about being mindful and making meaning in the process of creating.

For those of you who have taken my class, you know that I truly believe in using the expressive arts as a vehicle to create healthy change. We do this to find new and unique ways to tell our stories, heal, and promote self-expression (expression of your personality, feelings, experiences, relationships, or world view). This can be done through a variety of artistic mediums such as painting, drawing, dance, collaging, and writing. Since we may not all have access to paint supplies, colored pencils, pastels, etc., this class will only require a writing utensil of your choice and paper.

We are going to begin with a PONGO poetry writing exercise where all that is required of you is to fill in the blanks. I'm not sure about all of you, but sometimes looking at a blank piece of paper can be rather intimidating; especially when you're being asked to write about yourself. This writing method allows you to "jumpstart" your inner creativity of self-expression within a structured poem format. The purpose of having a preexisting format and writing contexts is to help eliminate any anxiety or frustration within this expressive art medium.

That's enough of that...let's get started. For your first assignment, you will be completing a poem called "Self-Portrait." Basically, you will be painting a picture of who you are through the written word instead of using a traditional canvas and paints. If you have any questions about the assignment, don't hesitate to ask. Remember to have fun with this! **Oh yeah, an example of a completed PONGO poem is below (the bold words are the ones I filled in the blanks with). Attached in the google classroom is assignment number one.**

PONGO Poetry Example

I am painting my self-portrait.

*For this work I have chosen the colors of **green, black, and purple.***

*The **green** (red, blue) stands for my **growth** (pride, sadness),*

*The **black** (green, black) for my **grief** (love of nature, history),*

*And the **purple** (purple, orange) stands for me **not always knowing what life will present** (personality).*

*The background of my self-portrait will have **mountains and wilting wild flowers** (flowers, fire) because my life has been **beautiful, but is also temporary** (blessed, full of pain).*

*In my self-portrait I will be holding **my hand over my heart** (a book, a basketball, my diploma) because **my heart hurts from time to time** (my education, sports, graduation from high school) .*

*In my self-portrait, my eyes will look **wide open** (diamonds, snake eyes).*

*When people see my self-portrait, I think they will say, **“it’s hauntingly beautiful.”***

*I would like to give my self-portrait to **my friend Kyle** (my brother, my best friend) because he/she appreciates the way we **spent time together in beautiful open spaces such as this one** (play with him, stick up for her all the time).*

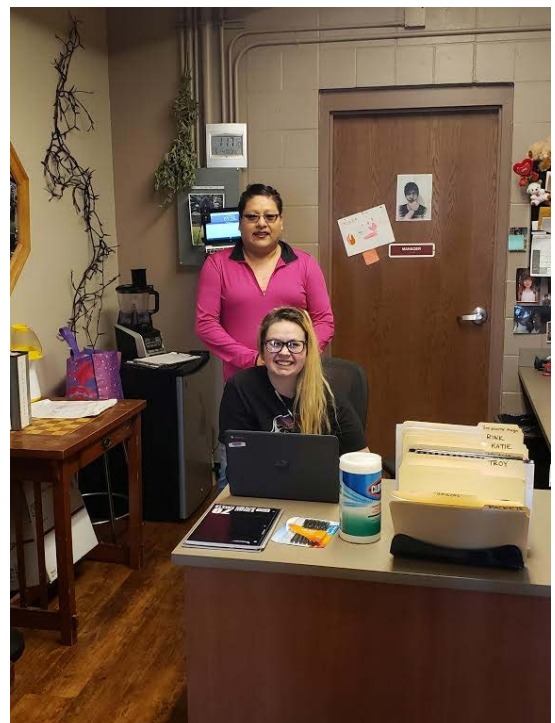
*The title of my self-portrait will be **“Mountains in the Midst”** (the Great One, Artist with Flowers, Basketball Superstar—Age 12).
By: Chris*

Classified Staff Staying Busy!

Buffalo Hide Academy would like to spotlight the efforts of Karleen WhiteGrass and Lacey Salois. Monday through Friday from 1-3pm these wonderful ladies are working to provide supports for our students as they navigate learning in the Covid-19 crises.

Lacey and Karleen hand out learning packets, provide technology support and reach out to families to check on basic needs. Families and students are able to have food boxes and hygiene materials brought to them curbside or delivered to their houses.

These Ladies are amazing, and we salute them!



Using Periodicals for Assignments and Credit Recovery:

After reaching out to several weekly and monthly periodicals, we have begun to receive issues and have started creating assignments and projects for those students who do not have access to the internet. These can be used for either original credit or as credit recovery assignments for our seniors that need it. Below is one example that has been distributed to students:



Credit Recovery: Covid-19 Distance Learning

TIME

#1: A Shift With Medic 61
(Time Magazine: April 20 / pages 36-39)

Instructions:

This credit recovery assignment is taken from the **April 20, 2020 edition of Time magazine, pages 36-39** (which is available at the Academy). It is worth 5 points.

Complete all sections to the best of your ability, being sure to write in complete sentences and using proper punctuation. You can either write your answers directly on this sheet, OR you can write on another sheet of paper (if you choose this, make sure to give each section a heading so I know what I'm grading).

**Please reach out if you have any questions or need any help. My email address is:
jasonk@bps.k12.mt.us**

Essential Question:

If you had a job that required you to work during this pandemic, would you want to show up for work? Why or why not?

Your Answer:

| Vocabulary: | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| Term: | Definition: | How It Relates To Assignment: |
| paramedic | | |
| empathy | | |
| symptom | | |
| gurney | | |

| Questions: | Your Response: (At <i>LEAST</i> one sentence using your own words.) |
|--|--|
| 1. This article begins with the line, "Allanna Badgley wakes up with a sense of doom." Why do you think she has this fear whenever she wakes up? | |
| 2. What is the additional role that paramedics are playing in this pandemic? | |
| 3. What are the items of clothing/technical equipment that Badgley has to put on before going inside a place to treat a patient with COVID-19? | |
| 4. How much do EMTs and paramedics make per hour <i>AND</i> what are their job responsibilities? Do you feel this is a fair wage - why or why not? | |
| 5. Are family members allowed to ride in the ambulance with someone that is suspected to have COVID-19? Why? What does this add to the job of paramedics? | |

| |
|--|
| <p>Writing Prompt: Write at <i>LEAST</i> a 1-paragraph response (3-5 sentences) to the following question: <i>What sort of long-term effects - either physically or mentally - might someone like Badgley face because of her job? Is there anything that should be done to help her? Explain your answer.</i></p> |
| <p>Your Response:</p> |

Assignment Exit Ticket

After completing this assignment, discuss what you have learned and found interesting and important. Must be 3-5 sentences!

Your Answer: