

Meditation and Mindfulness

Chris Weisbrot, MfA Master Teacher
Curtis High School

While the transition to online teaching was jarring for Chris and particularly so for his students, everyone seemed to be on the same page around how to continue teaching and learning at the beginning. However, as time went by, he noticed that attendance and assignment completions were slowing down - burnout was a real thing, and what his students needed most was a way to learn strategies for self-care.

"I think part of it was the sudden shift to be online. It was a week of teachers coming into the building and then suddenly everybody was just online. There was no transition. After I'd say two or three weeks of tasks, it just felt endless."

► How did Chris address burnout in his community through meditation and mindfulness?

Chris decided to dedicate one day of the week to his students' well-being. He started by finding a meditation video on YouTube, linking to it in Google Classroom, and giving an assignment where students watched the video and reflected on how it made them feel. Then something interesting happened - he heard from students that he hadn't heard from in weeks, and they were telling him that it put them in a place where they felt centered enough to go back to their other assignments.

"We've got five days in the week. One of these days needs to be for teachers and students to sort of decompress. The students were saying, 'Thank you for this. You know, none of my other teachers have hit pause or allowed a break - this was different and it was meaningful.'"

Date	Title
5/28	Adriene - Yoga at your desk
5/21	Daily Calm - Morning Meditation
5/14	Goodful - 5 Minute Meditation
5/7	Bowl Meditation
5/7	Headspace - Frustration
4/30	Square Breathing
4/23	Headspace - Reset: Decompress your body

Chris used playlists to give students a choice for spending their meditation and mindfulness time.

► Start using meditation and mindfulness by following these two pieces of advice:

1. Make a playlist - after a few weeks, you may notice that students have different preferences for how they want to engage in self-care. A simple playlist with links as a Google Doc gives your students the opportunity to meditate in the way that works for them.
2. Continually remember that this is a time of trauma for students, their families, and your colleagues. In order to meet the needs of students during this time, make sure that you are able to have a classroom community that knows how to take care of themselves.

"It's not so much about the content as the social, emotional development of our students. And there are no standards for that. There's not a set way to go about doing that. And so I would just tell teachers to take it upon themselves to be creative and you're allowed to be creative right now. You're allowed to do something different. So take that risk and the moment calls for it, right?"