

To get students to focus, some professors are asking them to close their eyes

April 08, 2016

The Washington Post:

On a rainy February afternoon, the ionic charge is palpable in Michelle Franci's physical chemistry class at Bryn Mawr College near Philadelphia. As Franci scribbles a mathematical equation for wave function that's projected on an overhead screen, students twirl ponytails, peck at keyboards and peek at their smartphones. They are quiet, yet there's an undercurrent of anxiety.

Franci is nudging students toward understanding the Bohr correspondence principle, a cornerstone concept in quantum mechanics that's as easily discernible as Mona Lisa's smile. Bohr's principle illustrates how classical mechanics (which predict how objects viewed with the naked eye will move) and quantum mechanics (which predict how microscopic objects will move) yield the same mathematical answer when the objects are large enough to observe. Franci has students work together to calculate a quantum mechanics probability on their laptops and projects their findings as a line graph. Then she asks students to do something odd: "We're going to take a minute and a half and just look at it."

...

A 2008 report, "Toward the Integration of Meditation Into Higher Education: A Review of Research," cites a 1998 study conducted over two semesters on 56 undergraduates split into two study groups, one of which practiced "concentration-based meditation." At the end of the study, those students "had significantly higher GPA scores compared to the control group." A 2012 randomized controlled study on 48 undergraduates, published in the journal *Psychological Science*, found that students who undertook a two-week mindfulness-training course achieved improvements in GRE reading-comprehension scores and working memory capacity, along with reductions in distracting thoughts.

...

Neuroscientist Daniel J. Levitin observes that multitasking exacts a toll on the brain by boosting production of the stress hormone cortisol and the fight-or-flight hormone adrenaline.

Read the whole story: [The Washington Post](#)