

What Does “The Contemplative Perspective” Mean in Higher Education?

From Mirabai Bush, author, with Daniel P. Barbezat, of [*Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Powerful Methods to Transform Teaching and Learning*](#)

Using contemplative practices in your classroom helps students develop the contemplative perspective. But what is the contemplative perspective and how does it encourage student learning?

As students and faculty members develop and deepen their use of contemplative practices, certain values and skills begin to emerge:

- **Patience and sustainability.** The contemplative perspective allows us to view problems as challenges to be solved and strengthens vigor and commitment. It helps us to approach situations with a fresh perspective.
- **Wisdom.** The contemplative perspective helps us to see things as they are, not as we wish they were or as we fear they are. Consequently, our decisions come from a more expansive place of understanding, and we can respond appropriately to any situation.
- **Passion.** The contemplative perspective can help us transform tendencies toward anger and self-righteousness into energy to create potential solutions.
- **Honest self-reflection.** The contemplative perspective fosters honesty in experiences and relationships. It helps students see what they uniquely bring to a discussion.
- **Calmness.** The contemplative perspective promotes stability and calmness. We can better know and address our emotional responses and become better leaders of others.
- **A sensitive and realistic sense of ethics.** With the contemplative perspective we become more aware of the discomfort that comes with deviating from our innermost values. Confidence in our commitment to this ethical path/approach brings courage and strength.
- **Clarity of purpose; integrity in the midst of complex situations.** The contemplative perspective helps us to hold and maintain a clear vision of our values.
- **Compassion.** The contemplative perspective helps us to appreciate on a visceral level the interconnections among people and in life. It promotes empathy, heightens sensitivity to suffering, and opens the heart, allowing us to better apprehend difficult situations and handle them with a greater sense of ease.
- **Focus.** With the contemplative perspective there is more moment-to-moment focus on every situation, whether it is planning an action, talking on the phone, or meeting with allies or adversaries. Such clear and focused presence enhances effectiveness.
- **Awareness.** The contemplative perspective provides greater insight into our own condition and that of others; our own needs and motivations and the needs and motivations of others; the total situation in which we find ourselves.
- **Skillful listening and communicating.** The contemplative perspective promotes empathetic and accurate listening. We listen better and more deeply to others and ourselves, and hear not just the words, but the essence of what is being said. With listening comes clearer and more effective communication.

- Creativity. The contemplative perspective, in promoting flexibility of mind and heart and the ability to let go of habitual patterns, including self-doubt, when appropriate and needed, allows us to open to new approaches and novel strategies and to solve problems and accomplish objectives more effectively.

Are you ready to try using contemplative practices to improve student learning? Then you'll need a copy of [*Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Powerful Methods to Transform Teaching and Learning*](#) by Daniel P. Barbezat and Mirabai Bush! [You can read the foreword by Parker Palmer](#) to get you started.