



MANAGING STRESS TO IMPROVE LEARNING PROGRAM NOTES

June 2011

Who Are We?

Program Notes is a publication of a new project of the New England Literacy Resource Center at World Education, Inc in Boston, Massachusetts called Managing Stress to Improve Learning, funded by Jane's Trust. Participants in the project, whose work is highlighted here, include the following:

Haitian Multi-Service Center, Dorchester, MA
Jean-Louis Daniel
Alice Nelson

Project Hope, Roxbury, MA
Jeymi Arroyo
Sarah Bayer

Sumner Adult Education Center, Sullivan, ME
Ronda Alley
Sally Daniels

The Welcome Project, Somerville, MA
Jeri Bayer
Lisa Gimbel

Vermont Adult Education Center, Colchester, VT
Linda Snow

World Education
Lenore Balliro



WORLD EDUCATION



Project Hope students practice yoga in their classes.

Breathing and Balancing By Sarah Bayer

At Project Hope, we decided we wanted to incorporate a physical activity—accessible to all students—into the classroom to help manage stress. I had participated in a training last year about how yoga has been used to work with people who have experienced trauma. I was impressed with the research done by Dave Emerson at the Trauma Center in Brookline, MA using very simple postures and breathing exercises.¹ Given that many of our students have experienced trauma in their lives, learning some basic practices by trained yoga instructors seemed like a way to begin bringing the body connection into our class, a class designed specifically to engage connections among the mind, body, spirit, and emotion.



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The first year of the Managing Stress to Improve Learning project is over, and I am still sifting through the riches that have emerged from the first stages of this experiment, generously and gratefully funded by Jane’s Trust and supported by World Education, Inc.

This second issue of *Program Notes*, like the first, offers a small selection of the work accomplished over the past six months and illustrates how participants varied their approaches to achieve similar project goals. Altered shoes? Bio-poems? Yoga in the classroom? Teachers and counselors used expressive projects as ways to build community, promote stress-reduction and mental health, inspire laughter, and, of course, build language and literacy skills.

This summer I will be building our website where you will find a substantial number of resources developed during the past year. We will offer teachers’ lesson plans, case studies, reflective writing, samples of student work, links to community mental health services, annotated bibliographies, and lots and lots of pictures and mini-videos illustrating the work we have done.

As we enter into the final cycle, we will be identifying areas for further exploration and will be continuing dissemination of our work at local, regional, and national conferences. Feel free to contact me at lballiro@worlded.org if you would like me to add you to our “Database of Interested People.” You’ll get updates and a more specific web address once our site is up and running.

Peace,

Lenore Balliro, Project Director

As I went through my files I was amazed at how much I have learned and the number of resources I have at this point. We are using “Stress Management” as our school theme for the six-week summer classes. All the classes will be doing two stress-related things each week and we will give the survey to all classes in August. Jean-Louis and I put together “stress resource folders” for the staff with general factual information and assorted classroom activities and lesson plans from the materials we have accumulated from you and everyone in the project over the year. Thanks for all your work to keep us chugging along and it is really fun to now be using it and helping others think about applying this in their classrooms.

—Alice Nelson, Haitian Multi-Service Center, Dorchester, MA

Breathing and Balancing Part II

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Planning

I had a number of conversations with both M and D, two recently certified yoga instructors trained at the South Boston Yoga studio, about our interest in bringing yoga to our students. They had both expressed excitement and interest in teaching. Given D's lengthy experience as an adult education teacher, I sensed she would bring her knowledge of adult learners into the yoga instruction.

The four facilitators of our Women of Strength classes—Sarah, Joan (ABE), Jeymi (ESOL level 4) and Grissell (ESOL level 3) —

“I liked the body movement from head to toes...I felt relaxed, flexible, and it helped me to know that I can still use my body as well as I want.”

were included in the initial two-hour meeting at Project Hope. We discussed our interests and what we thought might be supportive to our students in putting together a two-session curriculum. We agreed on two 75-minute classes on consecutive weeks. This offered us a week between classes. This way, we could get feedback from the first class and use it to plan the second one.

Moving and Breathing

We had a wonderful exchange about ways to demystify yoga and make it accessible, fun, and relevant to the students. We talked about the importance of introducing the combination of breath and movement, the core practice in yoga; we also discussed the ways some of our students might be put off by their impressions of yoga from the media, etc. We emphasized that we wanted to make sure the women could

learn simple postures that could then be incorporated into their regular academic classes. For example, their math teacher might offer a breathing exercise and posture before students took a test or before students presented in front of class to help with the stress of these situations.

Getting Started

In our Women of Strength class on Monday, February 7, before the first yoga class, we brainstormed and discussed yoga with the students. We also asked the students to sign a liability waiver form created by M and D. A number of students said they had done yoga at the gym or used a yoga DVD. In general,

they expressed interest in participating. We reminded them with a flyer posted around the building to wear comfortable clothing.

Our classes took place on Wednesday, February 9, from 9:30-10:45 for ABE and 11:30-12:45 for ESOL students. In the first class, D taught the first class and M assisted.

The class facilitators participated. D and M made sure at the beginning of class to ask if any student didn't want to be touched by them during class as they assisted with postures. They explained the origins of yoga and discussed the impact yoga had on each of them in their own journey of self-care and healing. We handed out a flyer of some basic chair yoga postures we received at the Managing Stress to Improve Learning initial institute training at World Education. Six sitting postures are illustrated and described in a simple, straight-forward way. D introduced how to practice deep breathing and then connected it to the posture. She went through the sitting postures and then invited the students to try standing balancing postures. After the first yoga class, we asked the students for their feedback. Many said they were happy with the class, offering comments like:

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Breathing and Balancing Part II

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“The practice helped me to shut out the outside and free myself from the inside.”

“I liked the body movement from head to toes...I felt relaxed, flexible, and it helped me to know that I can still use my body as well as I want.”

Some students offered suggestions for improving the yoga classes, such as using music and increasing the tempo of the poses. Others indicated that they used what they learned at home:

“I repeated the breathing movement, closing my eyes, relaxing my feet and arms.”

Tennis Balls and Self-Massage

M ended the second class with a breathing meditation exercise. A number of the students commented afterward how relaxing this was for them. At the very end of the class, M demonstrated how two tennis balls could be used for gentle self-massage for the shoulders and back. A number of the students were very interested in doing this at home once they purchased some tennis balls; some students asked where they could take a yoga class. The experience certainly sparked some interest!



Next Steps

Our plan is to continue incorporating a yoga practice into each of our Women of Strength classes. We've dedicated five to ten minutes at the beginning or end of class to practice two or three postures and breathing exercises. We will eventually ask students to volunteer to lead this activity. We have also created a reflection chart to document the yoga postures we do each week with a place for student and facilitator responses.

Last week one of our ABE math and computer instructors invited one of the students to lead a relaxation exercise in computer class. The student instructed the class in some deep breathing and a few of the stretches she had learned in our yoga classes. I have since shared with the instructor the finger, hand, and arm stretch we learned that can help the students as they prepare for

typing. The hope is that this few minutes of relaxation and stretching will become more a part of all our classes.

References:

Emerson, D. and E. Hopper (2011) *Overcoming Trauma Through Yoga: Reclaiming Your Body*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

Resources for Yoga in the Classroom

Butler-Ross, N. (2001). *Meditation Express: Stress Relief in 60 Seconds Flat*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Rowe, K.P. (2007). *A Settled Mind: Stress Reduction for the Classroom and Beyond*. Raymond, ME: Five Seeds. www.fiveseeds.org

Murphy, J. (2008). *Move the body. Stretch the mind: Open yourself to learning through breathwork, movement and meditation*. Edmonton, AB: Windsound Learning Society. To preview a sample: www.learningandviolence.net

Gardiner, P. *Yoga at the Kitchen Sink: Standing & Chair Yoga Poses for Seniors & Their Friends* Self published. See sample pages at www.yogaandseniors.com/sample.htm

She Said, He Said

From participation in the Managing Stress to Improve Learning project, I will always find a way to include stress management in my College Transitions instruction. Student understanding of the reality of managing college in their already complex life is important, but without the managing stress awareness and techniques, they might never achieve optimum growth in college.

Managing stress is a life skill necessary for all of us to find the balance essential for happiness and satisfaction. I am hopeful the student participants are gaining long-term take-aways from involvement in this project. The student feedback gained from their weekly narratives, classroom responses and from conversations with individual students seems to indicate short-term growth. Next December, after their first semester in college, I plan to re-survey the spring students to measure their Project take-aways at that point to gather additional feedback to further hone my approach to the managing stress needs of College Transitions students.

— Sally Daniels, Sumner Adult Education, Sullivan, ME



Ronda Alley, Sally Daniels, and Alice Nelson make stress balls at the March institute

Stress management has helped me through my teaching career this year. It has been a wonderful idea to keep the students alive for the complete class hour. Coming to class right after work asks lot of effort to the students to avoid sleeping. Fortunately Yoga, singing, and stretching have been there to wake up everyone who would feel sleepy. Thank you for letting me be part of the first Managing Stress cycle. During the summer, I will continue working with my students by using the great tools that I have earned from Managing Stress. Thanks again.

—Jean-Louis Daniel, Haitian Multi-Service Center, Dorchester, MA

I am inspired by the stories of other participants and with the sharing that has taken place in my classrooms because of formally taking the time in each class for stress management. It has also made me keenly aware of the level of stress in people's lives and made me more determined to help people learn tools and techniques that will help them and their families.

—Ronda Alley, Sumner Adult Education, Sullivan, ME

Getting to Know You: Using Bio Poems With Adult Learners

By Linda Snow

I have started using Bio Poems as a way for students to introduce themselves to me, their employment skills specialist. This activity was presented at our last Managing Stress to Improve Learning Institute in March and has been an effective tool in getting to know my students better. It has given me the opportunity to see what is important to them, what fears they may have, and what goals they may have for themselves.

I introduced this activity as a way to get to know each other. I then read my own Bio poem to the class. We also discussed how writing can help with stress reduction.

Next, I passed out the template for the poem (see below). I did not introduce this activity as a poem *per se* because writing poetry can often times elicit an uncomfortable feeling in students. I wanted them to be comfortable, relaxed, and free to express themselves with their own words.

The majority of the students were eager to start writing. Some had to pause for a moment

because it had been a long while since they had taken a moment to reflect on who they are as a person. I mentioned that it would be a wonderful activity to do with their children and most of the students requested copies to take home to their children

As I continued to gather the poems, I have found many themes running through them. All of my students want to be loved; they want to love others, and they want a better life for their children. They also want to be successful and financially stable.

I am finding this to be an invaluable tool to getting to know my clients: one-on-one and in class. They are enjoying taking a few moments to reflect on themselves, and I am getting to know what is important to them. It is helping to break down barriers that may be between us. This helps promote trust and in turn, deepens the employment skills training process.

Bio Poem Template #1

First Name

Who is (insert four descriptive words that describes your character)

Who loves

Who fears

Who needs

Who gives

Who believes

www.educationoasis.com/curriculum/LP/LA/personality_poems.htm

Michelle

Who is spontaneous, optimistic, loving, faithful, hopeful, a leader

Who loves her life with her 2 girls, her cat, walking, playing hidden object games, and reading Danielle Steele

Who fears never falling in love and getting married and that my girls will make the same irresponsible mistakes that I made as a teenager

Who needs constant support, vacation, to win big bucks to just obtain my goals in life

Who gives anything I can to anyone, even strangers

Who believes in God and has faith. I believe in my girls and support whatever huge amazing adults they are going to be

By Michelle, Student at Vermont Adult Learning

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Bio Poem Template #2

(First name)

(Four adjectives that describe the person)

Son or Daughter of (your parents names)

Lover of (three different things that the person loves)

Who feels (three different feelings and when or where they are felt)

Who gives (three different things the person gives)

Who fears (three different fears the person has)

Who would like to see (three different things the person would like to see)

<http://cuip.uchicago.edu/~adarice/cwsite/poems/poembio.htm>

www.facinghistory.org/resources/strategies/%E2%80%9Cwhere-i%E2%80%99m-from%E2%80%9D-poems

Jade

Who is impatient, loving, sarcastic, and independent

Who loves Hayden, my 3 year old

Who fears the dark, the future

Who needs more time to get things together

Who gives support, love, care, advice

Who believes with hard work and focus, you can achieve anything



Resources for Teaching Poetry Writing

Popoff, G. and Q.A. Lansana. (2010). *Our Difficult Sunlight: A Guide to Poetry, Literacy, Social Justice in Classroom and Community*. New York, NY: Teachers and Writers Collaborative.

www.educationoasis.com/curriculum/LP/LA/personality_poems.htm

www.facinghistory.org/resources/strategies/biopoem-connecting-identity-p

<http://cuip.uchicago.edu/~adarice/cwsite/poems/poembio.htm>

“Where I’m From” Poems

George Ella Lyon’s poem, “Where I’m From,” has been used by many teachers as a model for students to write their own identity poems. We explored the use of this poem in our March institute at World Education and discussed ways to help students ease into the writing of their own poems.

In the prewriting stage for this poem, students are read or listen to a copy of Lyon’s poem (see website url on next page). They are then asked to brainstorm elements from their own lives, drawing from images, sounds, smells, family names, family traditions, songs, sayings, religions, plants from their backgrounds. This process yields detailed and personal poems, and when read aloud, illustrate students’ commonalities as well as differences.

The sample poems on this page were written by students at Project Hope in Roxbury, MA.

Where I’m From

By Dorease

I am from Soul Train, from Sulfur 8 and Afro Sheen cosmetics

I am from bacon sizzling, hair straightening, gospel playing

I am from the Aloe Vera and the olive oil

I am from family walks after dinner and singing around the piano, from Jaqueline and Kenneth and The Walkers

I am from the West Indian culture, love & respect and love your self first before demanding it from others

From “A hard head makes a soft behind, and “Your eyes may shine, your teeth may grit, but none of this treat you gonna get”

I am from a Christian home

I am from Jamaica by way of New Jersey and plantains & curry goat

From my grandma Doris waking me up for Saturday chores, the smell of Pine Sol and Ajax Cleaner

I am from a line of strong Queens

Where I’m From

By Gracie

I am from cross colors

From Portuguese cooking oil and Pledge

I am from the Tide smell

I am from the Aloe Vera and the oceans

I am from holiday parties and birth marks, from Braz and Joana and Costa

I am from the constant cleaning and cooking

From “Never tell lies or steal”

I am from the Catholic faith

I’m from Angola and Cabo Verde and cachupa & mangos

From the fighting with 4 brothers, the protection of 4 brothers and the love of 4 brothers

I am from Cambridge

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Where I'm From

By Kelly

I am from the Sanbos and Pachinpletas

From Sula and Gorditos

I am from the smell of Azistin and the noise of the rooster and the dogs

I am from the cornfield and the beautiful mountain

I am from the times that you have to wear new clothes on Christmas

and long black hair

from Abuelita Tina and Abuelito Juan and Abuelito Rene

I am from the noisy family tendencies and popularity

From "El que mancha paredes y mesa da a conoser su bejesa" and "Dime con quien andas y te dire quien eres"

I am from going to church every Sunday

I'm from Incas and Mayas in the beautiful Siguetepeque and tortillas de arina, and the fried fish

From the time when Tia Chelo got pregnant, the family tried to hide it and forced her to get married

I am from a family that likes to fight but when you need them they will be there for you.

Where I'm From

By Mariam

I am from Shea butter, from Jumbo and Omo

I am from the 4:30 am morning prayer

I am from juice mango and the Ousula

I am from the Mandingo family and the Sesay family, from Mabanasia and Sekou and Ansu

I am from Mandingo great sense of belief and early morning cooking

From "Always work hard" and "Believe in your Creator"

I am from Muslim Love and Peace

Resources for Writing "I Am From" Poems

George Ella Lyon: Writer and Teacher

This site offers the poem, an audio of the poet reading her poem, and ideas for the classroom. www.georgeellalyon.com/where.html

How to Write a "Where I'm From" poem

This site gives teaching ideas for prewriting and writing a "Where I'm From" poem [www.ehow.com/how_4615832_write-where-i m-from -poem.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_4615832_write-where-i-m-from_-poem.html)



Brain Gym: Helping Students Focus

Brain Gym refers to a set of exercises developed by Paul and Gail Dennison, based on their work in educational kinesiology. The premise of brain gym is that certain exercises involving cross-lateral movements can help promote more balanced neural connections between both sides of the brain, enhancing concentration, focus, and cognition and a sense of well being. Interdisciplinary in nature, Brain Gym has elements in common with some Eastern practices such as acupressure and yoga.

Teachers in the Managing Stress program have integrated some of the Brain Gym movements into their classrooms, especially the PACE sequence, as a way to help students settle into class and focus on their learning tasks. PACE, which stands for Positive Action, Clear Energetic, is a short routine easily incorporated to the classroom. It is also fairly easy to remember and internalize as a tool for self-regulation for individuals whenever they need it.

Sally Daniel teaches a Transitions to College class at Maine's Sumner Adult Education program. She is becoming trained as a Brain Gym facilitator as part of the Managing Stress project. Sally noted that students find the PACE routine helpful. She pointed out that one of her students, clinically diagnosed with debilitating anxiety, has used the PACE routine on her own when she gets stressed, ducking into the woman's room before a test, for example, to calm herself down.

The following comments from Sally's class attest to the benefits of this approach. To read more about Brain Gym, please see the resources listed below.

Rob: I try to use PACE as often as I can... it seems to get my mind going and things come

to me easier when I use this prior to studying. I rub my chest while studying to get my mind going, it seems to help.

Sharman: The cross over is a good stress releaser for anyone.

I think this will be an awesome addition to our class time. This will help the stress levels, and maybe get some of my classmates to loosen up."

— Tim (student)

Tim: The best part of my day was going over the PACE. PACE stands for positive, active, clear, energetic. We talked about drinking plenty of water and where our brain buttons are. We covered the cross crawl and how to do the hook up. These are supporting parts of the PACE project. The class took part in playing out the second, third, and fourth sections of the PACE. I thought this was fun, and I know of no better stress reliever than to laugh. I think this will be an awesome addition to our class time. This will help the stress levels and maybe get some of my classmates to loosen up.

Michelle: This class has been very helpful in many ways. I have found a few ways to help with stress. I also have been working on my time-management and organization. I have never been so organized in my life. The college syllabus has really helped me with that. I enjoy trying all the little techniques we learn in class, those have also been helpful.

Resources for Brain Gym

www.braingym.org/

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y_Y0bD7i3TY

Circles of Control

By Ronda Alley

This week in my Juggling Life and Learning class we talked about worry and the things in our lives that we can control and the things we can't control. Students made circles of control/no control using construction paper, scissors, glue, and writing utensils. Some things that the students felt they could not control included the actions of other people and other governments, our government, natural disasters such as the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, death, war, lack of work, and the amount of homework they are assigned.

The things they felt they could control included their actions; what they wear each day; things they chose to do with their time, and what they eat from the choices they have. Both of these students, young adults, live with parents/grandparents.

We also did an activity that assesses what a student does with his or her time in the course of the week. It is something that Sally (Daniel) uses and I had a student retype it so it was a little clearer and easier to tally.

Both of my students found out that they spend at least 12 hours a day playing video

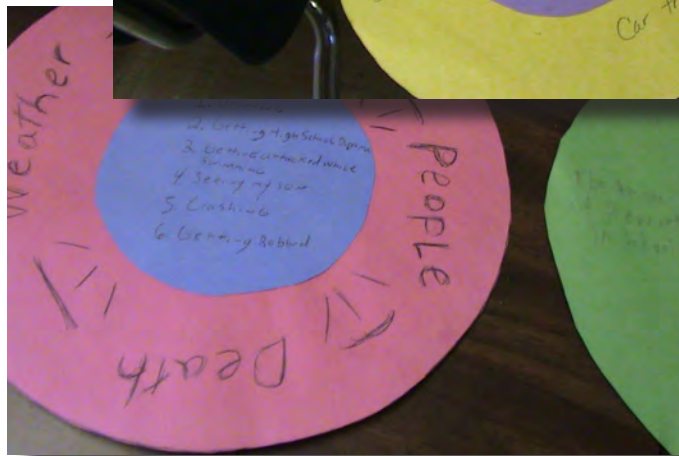
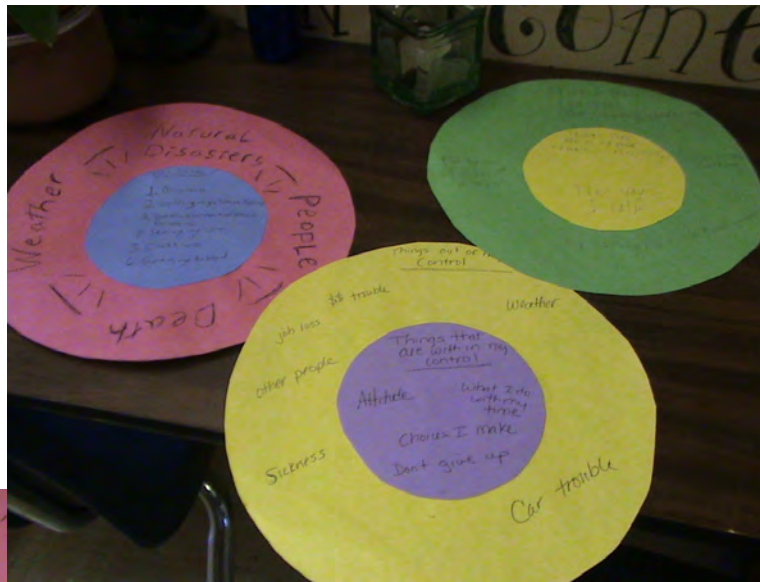
games!! They were both taken aback when they realized this. We discussed things they might like to be doing instead and both of them said "nothing." They love playing video games.

We brainstormed time management techniques they currently are using and we talked about time management techniques they have seen other students using. When we come back together as

a full group and everyone has done this activity we will be talking in more detail about possible time management techniques and one of the assignments will be to test out a time management technique.

nique.

Some of the questions I have for them about the video games are: Why do they play video games? Do they feel they play them to escape? How do they feel playing video games for this much time impacts those around them? I have a feeling that this will be a good way to discuss the impact of stress and how we deal with stress in our lives.



Music, Memories, Stress Management at the Haitian Multi-service Center

By Alice Nelson

Every week I have been increasingly including music into the daily agenda format. Some days I play music from the CD selection on my computer as students come into class and sign in. I can see the students instantly relaxing and smiling. Sometimes they will start to dance together and often they sing along. I have been using primarily classic Haitian songs like *Choucouenne*, *Haiti Cherie*, *Bon Anniversaire*, and *Ayiti Peyi-mwen*. This makes the classroom more inviting and welcoming.



weeks and focusing on different aspects of the lyrics over the course of the weeks really enhances retention. Some songs they really like and they have a long life (ie: *No Woman No Cry*, *Haiti Cheri*, *Choucouenne*) while other songs elicit little sustained



Teacher Jean-Louis Daniel and student at the Stress Reduction Workshop he presented with Alice Nelson at the Haitian Multi-service Center

Responses

I find that different age students respond to different music as well. (Older students love classic songs, younger students like reggae and modern mixes.) I will take out lines from the music and write them on the board using them to develop vocabulary. This is good for English expressions and metaphors, grammar, pronunciation, quick vocabulary memorization. I found that is unrealistic to expect them to remember a lot when the song is introduced but the repetition over several

interest. The students thought that Mary Chapin's *Thanksgiving Song* was too sad to be a good Thanksgiving song.

We are having a lot of fun with *To Dream the Impossible Dream*. I introduced this song in the middle of the month briefly and we have been slowly working through all the abstract images. I hope to continue into June because

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Music, Memory...

Continued from previous page

there is so much material to work on. This coincides nicely with our work on portfolios and end of year personal assessment and goal setting. It is full of infinitives: to dream, to fight, to bear, to run, to right, to love, to try. It is painfully inspirational. The music itself is a bit slow and difficult to sing to. I need to find some different versions to record. Jean Louis

I can see the students instantly relaxing and smiling. Sometimes they will start to dance together and often they sing along.

Daniel and I worked hard to put together a 40 -minute Stress Reduction Workshop for our BIG once a year Catholic Charities Health Fair. I am attaching the outline and song book. I must admit I was anxious about how the large

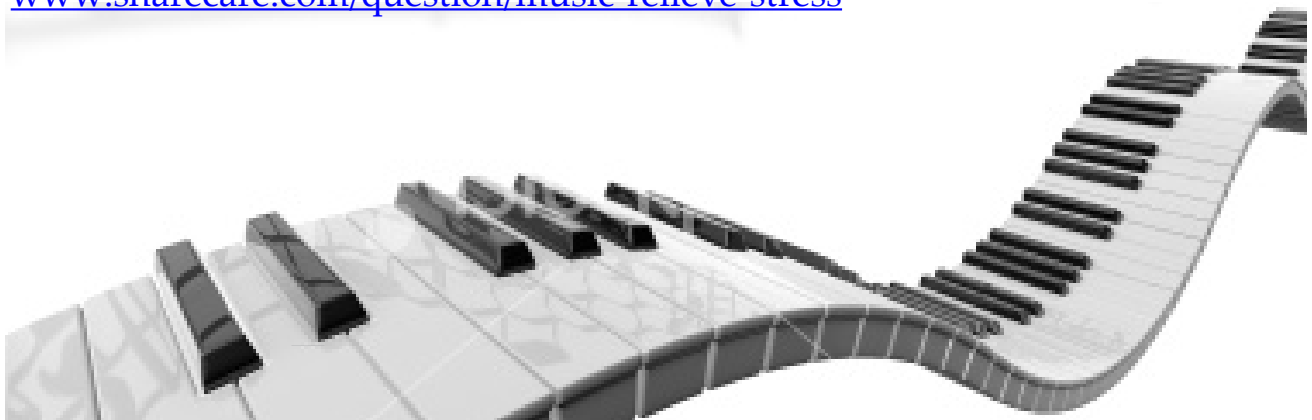
group would receive the agenda—but they were very engaged, positive. It was terrific. Our workshop continued for over an hour and we still had more we could have done. The fair coordinators were very positive and said they want to put us on the agenda next year for two hours!!! The session was very interactive, people were right with us and engaged, the laughing was terrific, the songs were nostalgic and sweet. JL had his keyboard and he recruited a student to play the drums; we handed out shakers to the audience to accom-

pany the music. I think I want to find a source for these little egg-shaped shakers—people loved them and I am afraid I lost 4-5 at the event. I only have two left now. These would be great hand out things. They feel nice; I saw people rubbing them

and just holding them as well as making music with us. This was a major focus for us in April and May. It took time away from our Song-book, and I feel we really need to push hard to get the songbook together for the summer.

Studies show that listening to soothing music lowers blood pressure and boosts immune cell count while reducing levels of stress hormones. Reduced stress will result in less facial tension and calmer skin. Avoid melodies that make you tense or that cause uneasiness.

www.sharecare.com/question/music-relieve-stress



Shoes, Glorious Shoes: Altered Shoes as Autobiography

In the altered shoe movement, artists transform ordinary pairs of shoes into something sculptural, metaphoric, symbolic, whimsical, or simply decorative. Two ESOL teachers and an employment specialist in the Managing Stress to Improve Learning project adapted altered shoes projects as a way to focus their students and clients on expressive reflection—where they had been, where they want to go in the future, where they walk around in their neighborhoods.

Inspiration

In the words of Linda Snow, employment specialist at Vermont Adult Learning: “The inspiration for our altered shoes project came from an experience that I had on one of my first days in my position as an employment specialist at Vermont Adult Learning. I was meeting with a client, and I immediately noticed that he was wearing work boots that had the soles falling off, tattered laces, and duct tape to hold one of the shoes together. I remember looking at the boot and thinking to myself, ‘This gentleman has a story to tell.’ Turns out he was a

construction worker that had been out of work for a long period of time. He had no car and had been walking everywhere he needed to go. I began to think about how our shoes are symbolic of who we are, where we have been, and where we hope to go in our lives. It is my hope that this project will allow students to reflect on their lives and express that through this art medium.”

Linda reports that one woman, who had recently suffered the loss of a loved one, was especially engrossed in her project and found it to be the first activity in a long while to give her solace and comfort.



Journeys in ESOL Class

Lisa Gimbel and Jeri Bayer of the Welcome Project developed a curriculum unit using altered shoes in their intermediate ESOL class. They explained:

“As part of an eight-week ESOL class offered to intermediate level English language learners that focuses on health and the community in Somerville, we decided to engage students in a project that would offer them a chance to express themselves creatively and contemplate their journeys as immigrants. Us-

Altered Shoes Resources

www.brighthub.com/education/k-12/articles/36327.aspx

secretlifeofshoes.blogspot.com/2005/03/evil-shoe-art-project.html

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oj1SGyfqCBI

www.solesistersfilm.com/shoes-are-important-to-women-in-dallas-county-jail

kathyspinkneedle.blogspot.com/2009/09/my-altered-art-shoes.html

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Shoes, Glorious Shoes

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ing shoes as a metaphor for journey, as well as a focus for language development, we invited students to “alter” a pair of discarded shoes by painting and decorating them and then to describe the story reflected in the transformed shoes.”

Shoes became a prompt for discussing journeys and transformations as they traveled to the U.S. from their home countries. In addition to learning new vocabulary, idioms, and language structures, students spent a part of two classes doing hands-on activities that triggered talking, laughter, sharing, and camaraderie among the students from several different countries who had only recently come together as a class.

Most of the students found the activity relaxing and comfortable, and one woman said:

I'm happy because I like to paint. I'm thinking of my kids. Now I see I can do this at home with my kids. I am forgetting bad things when I do this. If I cover the table with paper I can clean up after.

Another students said:

I felt relaxed. This was something different. I could pretend to be a child.



Playback Theater

Playback Theatre starts with personal stories from audience members and transforms them into theater pieces. ESOL teacher Lisa Gimbel of the Welcome Project in Somerville thought that Playback Theater would be a good way to draw from the experiences of her students—particularly around issues of their life stressors--and



Playback Theater skits *The Bus is Coming* and *It's Raining* in Lisa Gimbel's ESOL class



After developing and practicing their pieces several times, they performed their skits to the delight of other ESOL classes in the program.

use their stories as a way to practice English, explore their commonalities, and work toward positive social and personal change.

Along with the guidance of an experienced Playback Theater consultant, Lisa asked her students to think about, among other topics, what they liked and didn't like about their city, Somerville.

Some of the resulting skits involved waiting for the bus and not being able to find parking spaces., and getting a job where someone doesn't understand enough English.

Resources for Playback Theater

www.playbacktheatre.org/about/

www.hvpi.net/playtheater.htm

www.tonisant.com/aitg/Playback_Theatre/

More on Mandalas

In our last issue of *Program Notes*, we included descriptions and photos of how some teachers in our project have included mandalas as a way to guide focused meditation with students or as an activity to help them relax.

The teachers at Project Hope found another way to use mandalas in their program.

In a corner of the spacious hallway on the second floor of their building, a waiting area is set aside for students who arrive at their classes early or arrive too late to enter and need to wait for their next class.

Teacher/counselor Sarah Bayer knows that waiting can be difficult. She thought that setting up the outline of a large mandala on the table and inviting students to contribute to a design while they were eating could be a soothing activity.

She set out clear cups filled with beans of different colors: green split peas, white navy beans, black beans, kidney beans, orange lentils, and so on. The students understood the nature of mandalas from their previous classes, and Sarah placed a sample instruction sheet on the table encouraging people and explaining how to participate.

Over the period of a few weeks, the mandala emerged. When it was completed, Project Hope held a ceremony to present the finished mandala and acknowledged the collective artistic effort of the women.



Emerging mandala



Teachers Joan Rivera and Jeymi Arroyo in front of the completed mandala

Mandala Resources

www.mandalaproject.org/What/Index.html

www.free-printable-mandala-coloring-pages.com/free-mandalas-to-color.shtml

Resources

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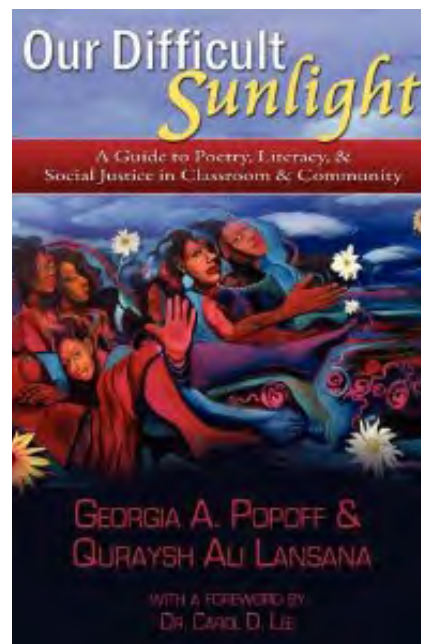
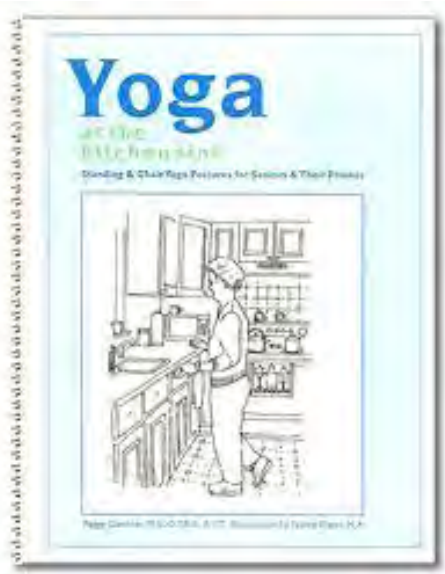
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