TIPS FROM THE DEAN:
Mindful Musings: A Guest Column by Tracy George

Tracy George is the Director of the Yale Well Initiative and the Good Life Center

Everything can seem pretty overwhelming at this time in the semester: finishing up class projects and papers, studying for final exams, getting ready to leave for the holidays... Some simple practices can help get you through! Try one (or all!) of these 3 mindfulness techniques when it’s all getting to be too much during exam time, family time or any time:

1. Breathe into Anxiety
When you’re really stressed, anxious or overwhelmed, how does your body feel? What physical sensations can you detect (e.g. tightness in the throat, heaviness in the chest, tingling in the arms, etc.). Once you pinpoint the most predominant physical sensation of stress in the body, inhale deeply through your nose and imagine your breath going right to that place. Hold it there for 3 seconds, then exhale slowly through your mouth. Rinse and repeat! How do those places of stress or anxiety feel now?

2. Hand Exploration
We so often get caught up in a storm of thoughts, self-judgments and worries winding around each other like a knot getting tighter and tighter. It can seem impossible to escape the over-thinking mind. In moments like this, allow your attention to fall into your hands. Simply notice how your hands feel at this exact moment – what are they touching? Do they feel cold or warm? Can you notice tingling in the finger tips or heat in the palms? And then explore which hand feels colder. Allow this investigation to drop all of your awareness out of your thinking mind and into your physical body for a few moments. How do you feel now?

3. RAIN
The next time you feel stressed, RAIN on it!
- Recognize the feeling of stress, anxiety, fatigue, overwhelm
- Allow it to be there, simply by pausing for a few seconds to name it (e.g. anger, stress, fatigue, etc.)
- Investigate what it feels like in the body (is there tightness, tension, heat, numbness, tingling, etc.) and in the mind (are there self-judging thoughts, doubt, future-thinking?)
- Nourish yourself in the moment (depending on how much time you have, some
options are: take 3 deep breaths into the belly, take a walk around the block, talk to a friend or loved one)
…and then… notice how you feel!

Be well and enjoy all the sensations of the holidays!