If you’re interested in how mindfulness, reflection, and contemplation can help us reduce stress, feel a greater sense of agency, and increase resiliency, you want to be a part of Contemplative Communities.

First, a brief clarification of some terms.

**Mindfulness** is attention to what’s happening right now, and the emotions or thoughts that arise in the moment.

**Reflection** is a process of pausing to notice where you’ve been, where you’re going, how you got here, and to make meaning out of that, going forward with clarity of intention.

And “contemplative” is the adjective to describe approaches that foreground your experience—including bodily reactions, thoughts, and emotions, so that we may be more effective agents of transformation, growth in our lives and communities.

---

So let’s pause here a moment, stand up, find someone in the room you don’t know, introduce yourself, ask your neighbor a question.

Raise your hand if you can tell me the name of the person you met.

😊 Mind-less-ness.

Do a sit.

---

Introduce some of the people involved in this project, me, Annette, Brigid, Kathy, Sandra.

We believe that stress, distraction, and reactivity aren’t givens. They are the products of what and how we think. Contemplative practices re-train us so we can reframe situations so that we can act ethically in the world, serve one another, joyously.
So what this project is a series of small events and opportunities that can eventually cultivate a campus and community ethos for contemplation and action, for reflection and service, for mindfulness and agency, so that we can build more just and compassionate lives for ourselves and more just and compassionate systems and structures with one another.

We have some ideas about how to do this, but we want you to be a part of building these communities.

And so there are some existing initiatives you can be a part of that I’ll tell you about in a moment, but we are also building an advisory board of students, faculty, staff, and community members who will bring to the group their curiosity about life, commitment to service and compassion for all beings so that together we can identify issues and opportunities for this group—this project—to serve so that we can together not just survive but really thrive.

So one of the pieces is we’re building a suite of contemplative General Education courses you’ll be able to start taking next Spring. We’re developing contemplative approaches to PP, SS, SI, and CT. These will be four credit courses capped at 15 students. We’ll be using contemplative approaches in the courses themselves but students will also learn how to bring these approaches to a variety of disciplines and experiences to serve our communities. Students will help to design these course experiences and their applications to working and living.

Another is “Living with Purpose” for first year students, based on Harvard model of about eight students getting together with a couple of faculty and staff a few times a semester to recognize and discuss issues of meaning and purpose, to develop a sense of agency—that we are in control of our lives, and resiliency, that we can adapt to an ever changing world.
A third piece is bridging graduate and undergraduate students’ experiences. We like to invite graduate students to bring their research and professional goals to bear on Plymouth state community.

A fourth piece, and the last I’ll share for now, focuses on how we live and work with one another. Faculty, staff, and students can all benefit personally and professionally from learning about what I’m calling habits of awareness, tools for engaging with the self and others from a place of genuine curiosity, compassion, and awareness.

We currently have an open reading group and host meditation Mondays and we’re eager to hear about how we can design experiences that nourish us rather than tax us, that are joyful to participate in an not simply another box to check off or obligation to fulfil.

Which brings me to my final point—how you can get involved.

We’re currently building our advisory board and seeking undergrad and grad students as well as staff to serve on that board, to bring to us ideas and issues that concern YOU so that we can build communities that respond to your needs and desires, that fulfill your vision.

So I’ll pause here for questions, sign up sheet.