



USING MINDFULNESS FOR WRITING-RELATED ANXIETY

Trying to start a new academic paper used to leave me in a cold sweat, panicked and nauseated. When I sat down to start, my mind was distracted by thoughts warring for my attention. I often postponed the work until hours before it was due. Then, in a mad rush, I would write a chaotic paper full of mistakes and a paucity of cohesive thought. I wondered if there was a better way to write school papers that wasn't racked in throat-throttling stress.

I found a powerful and simple answer this summer. I took an intensive study abroad class on Buddhist Theory in France where I was exposed to mindfulness practice, and learned to write from a place of stillness.

To practice, I would sit still, focus on my breathing, and observe my surroundings without letting my thoughts drift away to things in the past or future. When my thoughts did arise, I labeled them "thinking" and gently let them go like butterflies from my palm, returning my focus to breathing.

Something miraculous happened: after practicing meditation, I felt centered and clear-headed, ready for any task. Meditation cleared the obstructions to my writing: fear, anxiety, and racing thoughts.

Meditation is a game-changer for this anxious writer. If you suffer some of the same anxieties or blocks before you write, I recommend you give it a try. For those who have never tried meditation, try listening to a [guided meditation for beginners on YouTube](#).

College is hard enough. When it's time to start writing, we owe it to ourselves to take care of, not punish, our mind and well-being.

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