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# Classroom Practices Chapter 3

* Attention drives brain plasticity. During lessons, direct your students’ attention to specific aspects. Saying “pay attention” creates the wrong kind of attention. Good attention means taking in less, not more. It is the ability to direct your attention to something specific. In the classroom you want directed attention.
* Do a simple breathing meditation for 1 minute at the beginning of class. This can be done with all ages. Young children can put their hand on their belly and focus on their hand going up and down with their breathing. Older students can simply focus on “breathe in, breathe out.” This one minute spent on meditation will pay off in bigger dividends with focused attention and reduced stress. Remember, meditation can make some people feel stressed and fearful, so do not require it or do it in a manner that it would be obvious if some students did not participate.
* Watch your facial expressions. Traumatized students read neutral expressions as threatening.
* Have a few guiding metaphors that you can say to encourage your students and teach a more positive attitude. Ask students what guiding metaphors they came up with and what statements help them relax. Then use those. Even statements like “you’ve got this” will work.
* When students make remarks such as “I’m never going to get this” immediately reframe it for them. “You have mastered previous material and you will master this” or “it often feels that way when someone is learning something new but you will get there.”
* Set intentions for students. Explain the purpose behind the lesson. For example, today as you read through the material, intend to find three causes of …” or whatever the objective may be. You can say “today I intend to demonstrate to you the importance of ….”
* Use visualization and imagination to promote positive states. Before a test, ask students to imagine that they are the teacher taking the test. Research has shown this to be effective. Whenever you ask them to visualize success, be sure to focus on the *process*, not the *outcome*. They can’t control the outcome, but they can control the process. For example, instead of imagining that they will get an A, they can imagine that they will study effectively.
* Direct their attention toward positive things. Of course, an ideal way is to notice when someone is doing better on a task or skill and point that out. But you can also point out what a gorgeous day it is and take a moment to look out the window and take it in. Ask them if they have any fun activity planned for outdoors later. A positive attitude pays off in achievement, so this is time well spent.