Chapter 4
Strategies for the College Classroom

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ABSTRACT

College students often encounter situations that may cause them to experience stress and anxiety. The students’ response to these situations can impact their mental health and well-being. This chapter discusses the impact of college students’ ability to regulate their emotions when faced with stressful situations. Examples of mindfulness based practices that can be integrated into a college classroom are presented as tools to help college students regulate their emotions in order to improve their mental health and well-being.

INTRODUCTION

In order to help college students cultivate flourishing mental health and well-being, we need to understand the role that emotions play in our ability to handle the challenges we face each day. We also need to provide students with tools to overcome stress and anxiety. While this chapter focuses on college students enrolled in teacher preparation programs, the ideas can be transferred to other disciplines. This chapter begins by exploring a model of emotional intelligence in order to develop an understanding of how we process our emotions. Next, we will examine how we are able to regulate our emotions and how this ability impacts our daily experiences. We will then review the theory and research related to mindfulness based practices which is an approach that helps us regulate our emotions. Finally, we will discuss several mindfulness based practices that can be incorporated into a college classroom to help students cope with the emotional challenges they face on a daily basis.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) model of emotional intelligence identifies four mental abilities: perception of emotion, use of emotion to facilitate thought, understanding of emotion, and management of emotion. Perception of emotion refers to the ability to accurately perceive emotions in yourself and others by reading facial expressions, tone of voice and body language. “The ability to recognize one’s own emotions and identify how others are feeling requires attention to multiple internal and external cues and the analysis of both verbal and nonverbal communication in oneself and others” (Brackett & Katulak, 2007, p.7). Use of emotion to facilitate thought refers to the ability to use emotions to prioritize thinking as well as to think creatively. This ability allows us to make cognitive decisions that are guided by our understanding of the emotional impact of our actions. Understanding of emotion refers to the ability to associate emotional responses with the typical actions that are associated with them. For example, it is the understanding that anger is typically associated with aggressive actions. Management of emotions refers to the ability to regulate your own as well as other’s emotions in order to reach a specific goal. We will explore the idea of emotional regulation later in this chapter.
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