

Be Still and Know: A Contemplative Approach to Faith Formation

Session 1

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**CONTEMPLATIVE
YOUTH MINISTRY**

PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF JESUS

**Mark
Yaconelli**
Foreword by Anne Lamott

Youth Specialties



A story of promise

The Youth Ministry and
Spirituality Project

Principles of Contemplative Youth Ministry

1. **Sabbath:** The sacred balance between work and rest.
2. **Prayer:** Desire for intimacy with God in Christ.
3. **Covenant Community:** Ministering through small groups of people committed to mutual support and growth through praying, studying, and discerning together.
4. **Accompaniment:** Forming relationships and striving to live the life of discipleship together.
5. **Discernment:** Practicing openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
6. **Hospitality:** Welcoming and integrating young people into the church community.
7. **Authentic Action:** Being moved by God's love to share that love, mercy, and justice in the world.

Impact of YMS Project on Youth Ministers

- “Wow! You gave me permission to be a spiritual person, to seek God, to seek holiness, to reconnect with the sacred in my life.”
- “I’ve slowed down, and I’m not always running from one place to the next trying to squeeze everything in.”
- “Through the project I realized I’m never alone.”
- “There is healing when this pain and tension is aired out in the presence of God and a community of faith.”
- “The project has enabled our team of laity to be fed spiritually and to find what it is like to live in Christian community.”

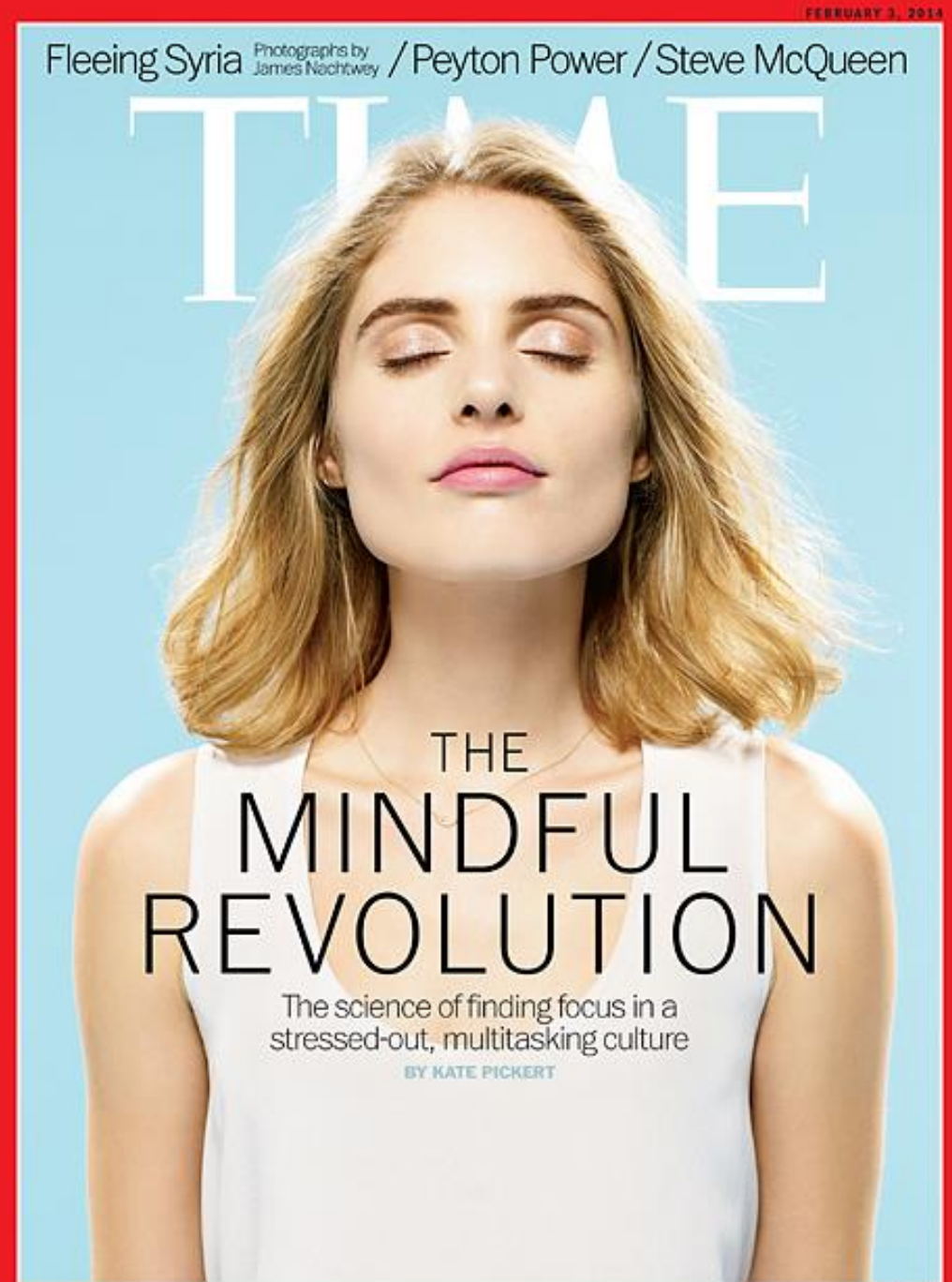
Source: Mark Yaconelli, *Growing Souls: Experiments in Contemplative Youth Ministry*

Impact of YMS Project on the Youth

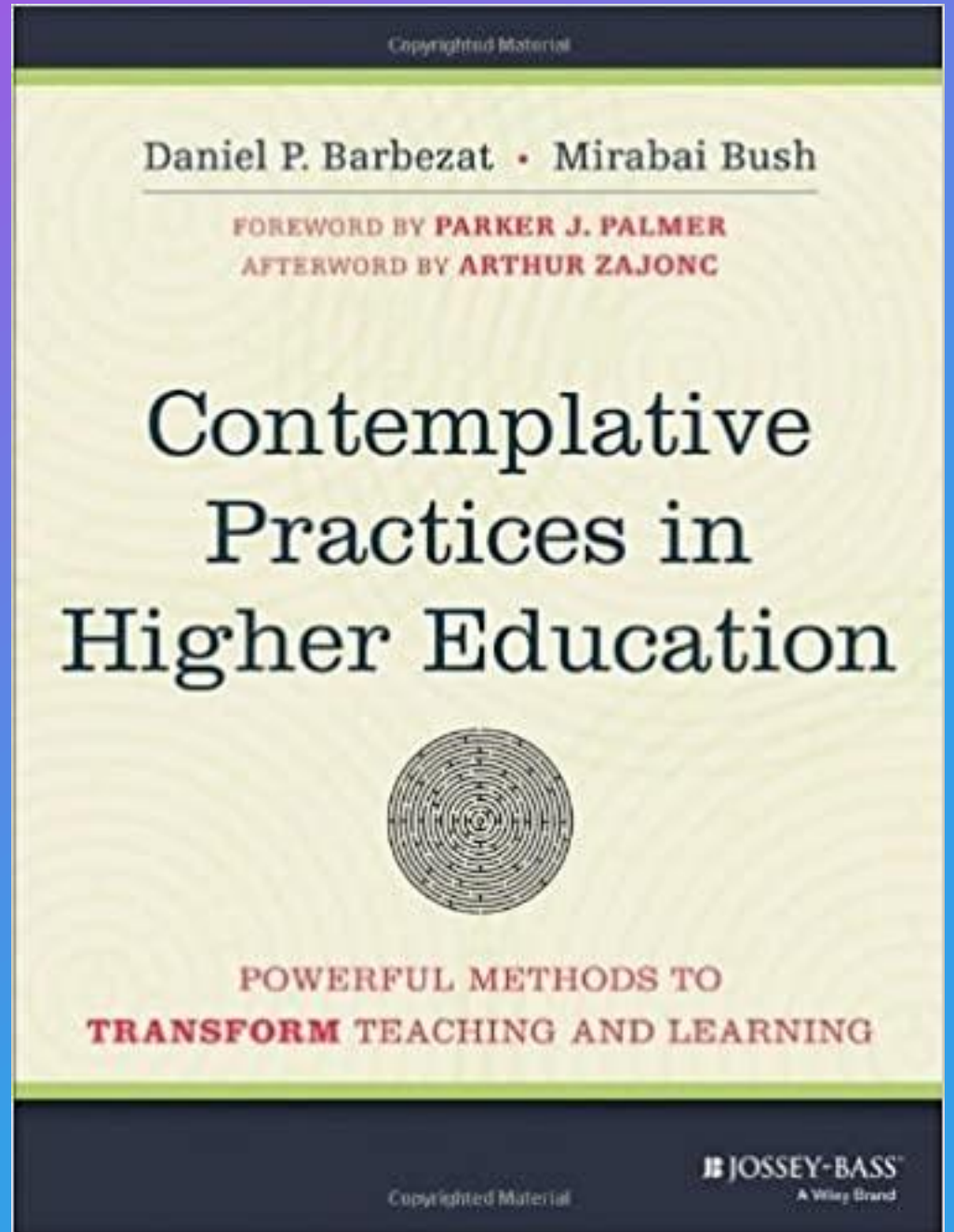
- “Everybody relaxes and gets into a real comfortable setting, and its much easier to pray.”
- “Church isn’t like any other thing I do... When I come to church it’s like time stops. You can be yourself and forget outside pressures.”
- “It’s my outlet at the end of the week. I just sit down and breathe and go through what’s happened that week and make sense of it.”
- “The adults treat us different here. The youth have a large spot in this congregation. We’re treated with respect.”
- How can adults help young people realize the reality of God: “Like, they can tell you as much as they want, but they have to show you that in some way.”

Source: Mark Yaconelli, *Growing Souls: Experiments in Contemplative Youth Ministry*

The Mindfulness Movement

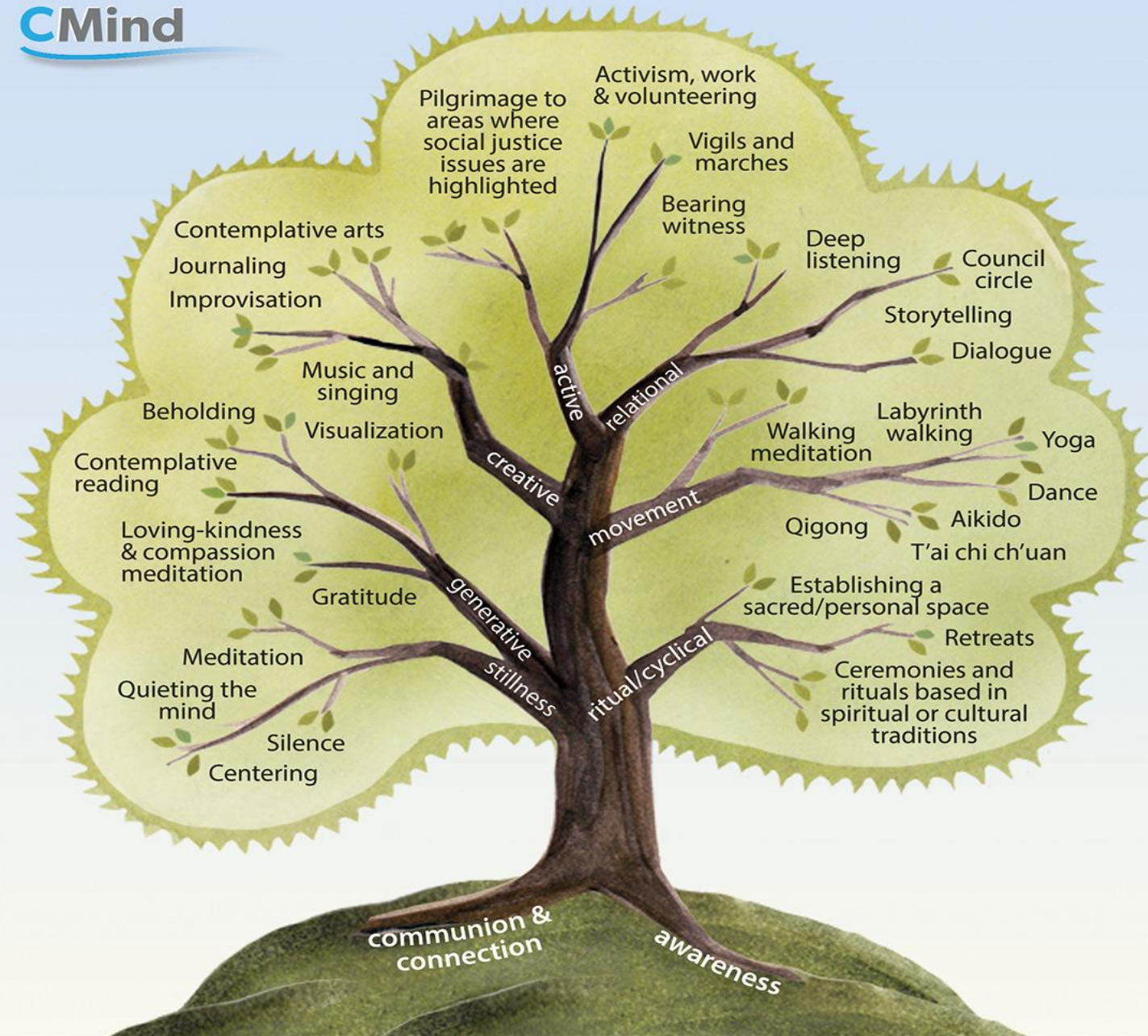


Contemplative Practices in Higher Ed



Contemplative Practices in Higher Ed

CMind



The Tree of Contemplative Practices
CONTEMPLATIVEMIND.ORG

Enhancing attention

- On average students only sustain attention on academic material 5-6 minutes before diverting their attention (to texting, social media, etc.)
- James Lang, *Distracted: Why Students Can't Focus and What You Can Do About It*

Studies have demonstrated that meditation rewires the brain and improves capacity for sustained attention.

- MacLean et al., "Intensive meditation training improves perceptual discrimination and sustained attention."

Alleviating anxiety

Anxiety and depression top list of problems teens see among their peers

% of teens saying each of the following is a ___ among people their age in the community where they live



Studies have demonstrated that meditation reduces anxiety and depression.

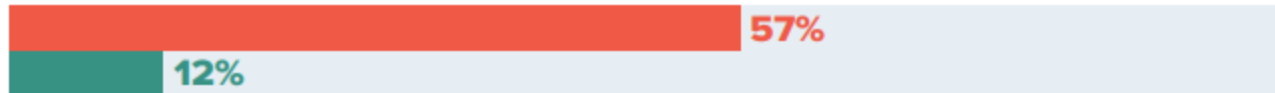
- Barbezat and Bush, *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education*

Promoting connectedness

Students who feel they belong at school say they are “flourishing a lot” in their mental health at higher rates than those who do not feel they belong.

● Not flourishing ● Flourishing a lot

I am lonely at school most of the time and do not want to be there most days.



Studies suggest that meditation promotes social connection and empathetic responses to others.

- Barbezat and Bush, Contemplative Practices in Higher Education

Finding meaning and purpose

Young people who agree that *“school is a place where I can ask questions and explore so that I can find my purpose in life”* are more likely to say they are *“flourishing a lot in my mental health”* than those who disagree.

● Agree ● Disagree



Establishing a contemplative practice is one of the four most common themes among people who report having a strong sense of purpose in life.

- Springtide Research Institute, *Mental Health and GenZ*



The Christian Contemplative Tradition



Jesus of Nazareth

“Whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret” (Mt 6:6)

“You are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing.”
(Lk 10:41)



St. Paul

“The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7)

The Desert Fathers





The Carmelite Tradition

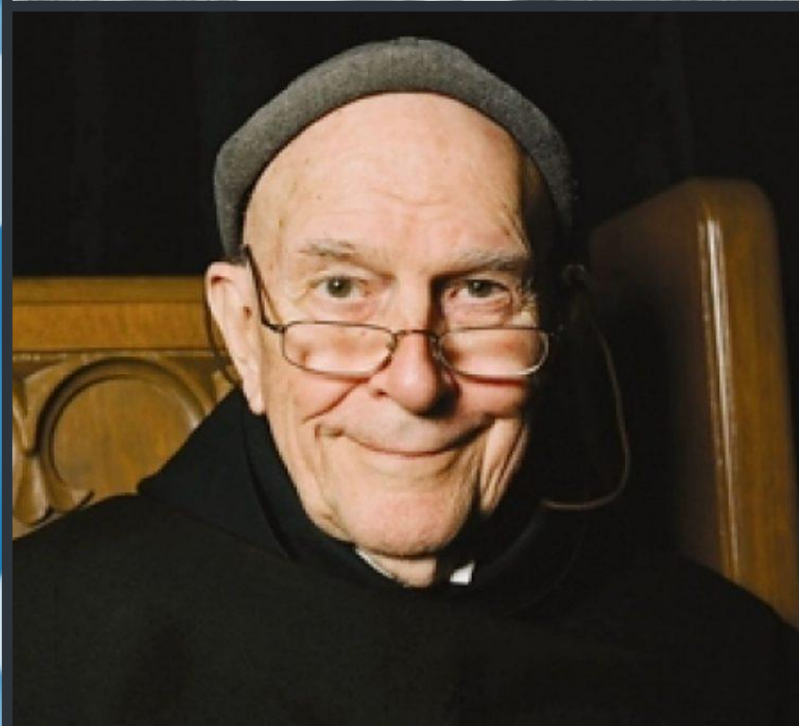
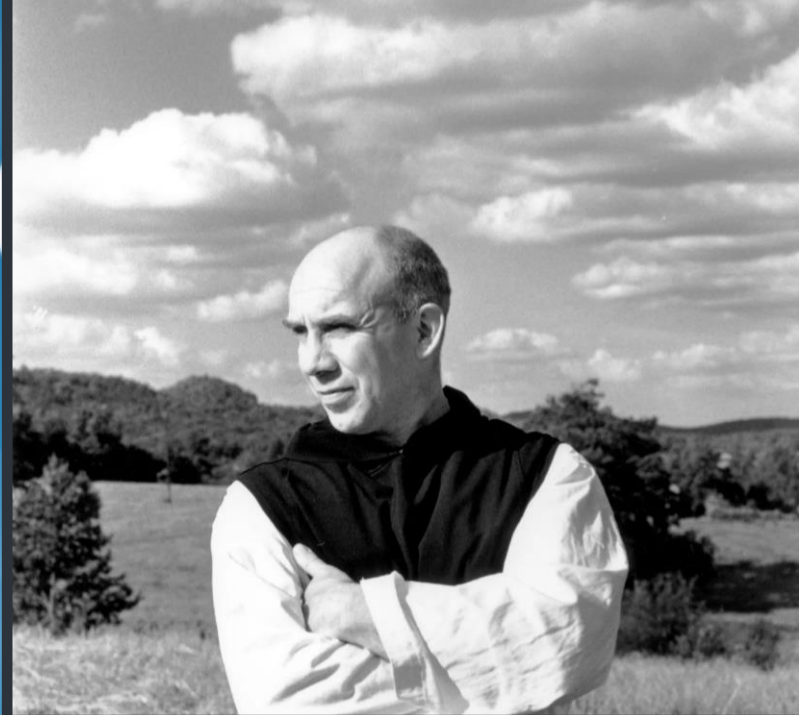


The Benedictine Tradition



The Ignatian Tradition

Modern Day Contemplatives



Key Insights

(To be developed more tomorrow)

“**the definitive aim** of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.”

- John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, #5

Key Insights

(To be developed more tomorrow)

- We all yearn for peace, communion, and fulfillment.
- The Christian tradition offers tried and true guidance for discovering these.
- And yet we find this work challenging.
- It requires opening a space for and trusting God.
- It happens through relationships.