



TUNING THE STUDENT MIND

RESOURCE AND DISCUSSION GUIDE



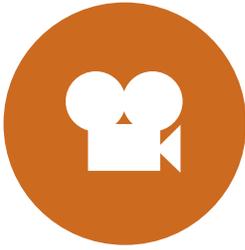
USING THIS GUIDE

The *Tuning the Student Mind* Resource and Discussion Guide is intended to introduce educators and their students to the topics explored in the documentary film *Tuning the Student Mind*, and to provide a framework for bringing identity studies, consciousness-based learning and meditation practices into the college classroom experience.

This guide will find especially apt use among educators and facilitators seeking to design or implement curricula similar to that created by Molly Beauregard in her “Consciousness, Creativity and Identity” course at the school for Creative Studies in Detroit. For them, the *Tuning the Student Mind* film, paired with Beauregard’s curricular framework, classroom discussion prompts and selected bibliography, will support the further development of syllabi, reading lists and college-level coursework.

To be in touch with the *Tuning the Student Mind* creators, please visit www.TuningTheStudentMind.com/Contact

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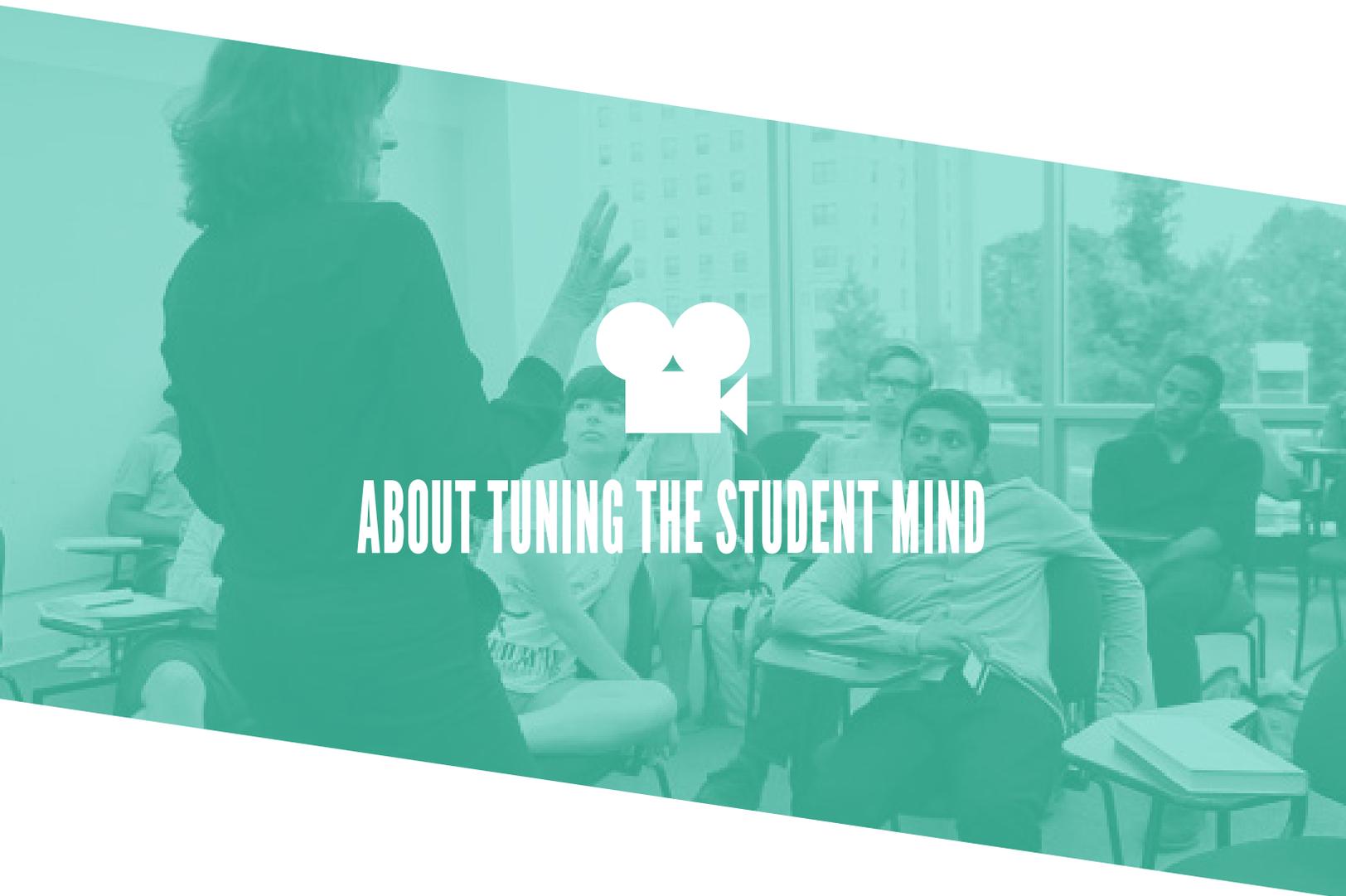
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ABOUT TUNING THE STUDENT MIND



THE BEGINNING

In 2011, Molly Beauregard, a sociology professor at the College for Creative Studies in Detroit, offered a groundbreaking new course to her undergraduate students: “Consciousness, Creativity and Identity.” Rooted in the academic literature of identity studies, Beauregard’s class was unique in offering students the chance to experience both the traditional theoretical approach to learning and an experiential component. Alongside a conventional, rigorous syllabus, her course also integrated silence, reflection and transcendental meditation, providing students not only with an introduction to the discipline of identity studies, but an opportunity to learn for the sake of self-discovery.

Furthermore, by using meditation as a foundational platform for learning, Beauregard allowed students to use moments of personal epiphany to better connect with the information presented in the course. The results were transformative.

THE FILM

The *Tuning the Student Mind* documentary follows the journey of three students enrolled in Beauregard’s course. In an intimate, 30-minute portrayal, viewers witness the impact of her innovative, first-of-its-kind curriculum.

Through the subjects’ personal stories, moments in the classroom and nuanced interviews, the film illustrates how the *Tuning the Student Mind* approach creates not only good scholars, but also students who develop deep, self-reflective awareness and a sense of inner potential. As the narrative unfolds, we understand how Beauregard’s bold and unconventional approach to identity studies teaches students new methods of inquiry, pushing them to ignite their own creativity and imagination.

THE FOUNDATION

An outgrowth of the college course, the Tuning the Student Mind Foundation supports universities as they pilot consciousness-based educational experiences for students and faculty. Offering both consultation and seed grants, the Tuning the Student Mind Foundation helps educators develop curricula that focus on connection over separation; collaboration over competition; and academic inquiry as a complement to deepening consciousness and self-awareness. This guide is one resource among many that forwards the foundation’s effort to support consciousness-based learning in higher education.



WHY CONSCIOUSNESS-BASED EDUCATION?

Today's culture bombards all of us with an overload of visual and sensory stimuli. For young people, who often also face an educational climate that places students under enormous pressure to achieve and produce, this culture can be particularly toxic. In addition to lacking inspiration, college students across the country report anxiety disorders, burnout, and compromised academic performance. And, it's getting worse. In 2014, the University of California, Los Angeles, Cooperative Institutional Research Program's annual survey revealed that entering first-year college students had reported the lowest level of self-rated emotional health since the survey began 49 years ago.¹

In cases where students come to school already suffering from underlying disorders such as ADD, ADHD and bipolar disorder, symptoms of anxiety, depression and academic disengagement are often magnified. For a minority of students, the symptoms are truly extreme. Between 6.6% and 7.5% of undergraduate students report having seriously considered suicide.² And 21% of college students aged 18 to 24 meet the criteria for an alcohol use disorder, yet most don't seek treatment.³

But even students who otherwise present as healthy, productive and engaged often report feeling overwhelmed and emotionally unmoored—and ultimately, ill-prepared to learn. It's clear that the most stressed minority of students represents the tip of the iceberg, distracting us from the broad majority of college-age students whose emotional health is in jeopardy.

As the director of the UCLA program told The Huffington Post in early 2015, college students "are more stressed because they're not allowing themselves to find the release from all of the stress."⁴

A multitude of cultural factors contribute to emotional distress among college-age adults. Researchers report that the rise in social media use and the decline of real-time socializing may be among them. Constant digital connectedness and social pressure to perform may be others. But the lack of time and space to reflect, look inward, and find moments to detach from and transcend the constant pulse of information and input are important additional factors.

Consciousness-based education aims to integrate that opportunity to reflect into the classroom experience.





THE CURRICULUM

An outgrowth of Beauregard's course, the Tuning the Student Mind curriculum encourages the inclusion of a diversity of cultural perspectives on Consciousness, Creativity and Identity. It also incorporates a meditative experience demonstrated to reduce stress and to increase creative output among students.

KEY QUESTIONS PROMPTED BY THE CURRICULUM INCLUDE:

- ? How does the subjective experience enhance intellectual inquiry in the classroom?
- ? Where does the creative spirit come from and how can we affect the conditions under which it thrives?
- ? How can we reintegrate creativity and imagination into our own lives?
- ? How can we tap into the source of all potentiality and use it to the best of our ability?
- ? Is it possible to create a classroom experience that supports the creative impulse in rich and diverse ways?
- ? Does meditation lead to a clearer, less inhibited learning process for the individual?

The Tuning the Student Mind curriculum also offers students the opportunity to engage their imaginations so that they might stand outside their experiences, and the experiences of others, and consider them anew. Shifting the focus from "What do I want to do?" to "Who do I want to be?" reconnects students with their truest passions. Encouraging the search for meaning in the classroom also promotes life-long learning and curiosity.

Learning to think creatively requires more than just the routine process of acquiring knowledge. In fact, a truly awake individual breaks free from the immediacy of personal circumstances and experiences. Students enrolled in courses that incorporate consciousness-based learning not only develop the ability to see and understand varying perspectives; they also grow in compassion and awareness. Indeed, it is the goal of the Tuning the Student Mind curriculum to encourage students to look inward while imagining the society of the future.

The Tuning the Student Mind curriculum can be seen as integrating three areas of study:

THE STUDY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The secret hunger that gnaws at most students' souls is the desire to discover the meaning of life. It is not so much that any of us actually believe we can "figure-it-all-out"; it is just that we crave some understanding of our purpose here on earth.



The exploration of consciousness provides students with a wild adventure into the vast terrain of the self. Silence, unbounded and expansive, is captivating. Consciousness, as a foundational aspect of learning, encourages the practice of reflective self-consciousness. This quality of not only being aware but aware that you are aware allows students to reflect on rather than just accept the conditions of their life and experiences. Ultimately, it also helps students to respond to the world around them without being unduly reactive or hostile to the problems they see.

Consciousness studies in the classroom helps students visualize new possibilities. Dipping into the pool of pure consciousness that is the basis of all of us allows students the joyfulness of feeling their most unbounded self. Meditation in the classroom restores the balance and inspiration students are so hungry for.

THE STUDY OF CREATIVITY

The creative impulse is the core basis for all of life. In fact, creativity flows freely if we let it. Each of us is, simply put, “creativity in action”. The question is: how do we tap into the flow of ideas? While science and intellectualism provide the fuel for the mind, inspiration and creativity offer the keys to opening the heart.

The assumption that the only valid way of knowing is logical, rational and linear has limited our imagination and our creativity. When we don't have coordination between the heart and the mind, we're not operating to our fullest potential. Intuition requires a coordinated mind and heart. Constraining the heart in preference for the mind denies our spontaneous growth. When students feel constrained, they suffer. Our test-heavy, career-focused, outcome-oriented educational models have resulted in a profound loss of meaning for students. Repeatedly measuring what is known often feels rote. In contrast, exploring the unknown through consciousness-based educational models provides students with the greatest act of creativity imaginable.

THE STUDY OF IDENTITY

Traditional paradigms of identity studies offer a rather static view of identity. In fact, the dictionary defines identity “as the state or fact of remaining the same one or ones, as under varying aspects or conditions.” Psychologists and sociologists have narrowly defined attributes of identity and how they relate to behavior, to mental health and to belief systems. We become our beliefs, our diagnosis, our history, our job and our choices. Through these frameworks of definition, we understand ourselves to be splintered aspects of a whole.

The irony of the traditional structure of identity studies is that it ignores the science of evolution. Rather than acknowledge the mystery of the underpinnings of identity, we measure momentary expressions and behaviors of individuals. These narrow definitions of understanding do not capture the essence of identity any more than one photo tells the story of an entire life. Sadly, they also ignore the question of what an individual can become.

The simple idea of becoming is profound. When this idea is introduced to identity studies, it transforms understanding among students. Importantly, the notion of change inspires the quest for meaning, for understanding and for growth. The idea of potential is so powerful and so luminous that it unleashes students' innate desires to be something more. The Tuning the Student Mind curriculum encourages this expansive approach.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND DIALOGUE

The following questions are intended to prompt discussion among an educator and the students in his or her classroom; to inspire small-group conversation among students speaking with each other; or to evoke creative ideas and self-discovery among students who are pursuing take-home assignments as part of a course integrating the Tuning the Student Mind curriculum.



1 At the beginning of the film, Professor Molly Beauregard poses the question: “What happened to meaning? What happened to people being interested in who I am? And, how is it that the educational process became so devoid of curiosity?” Do you identify with this assessment of the educational process? What factors do you feel have contributed to his reality? Is it important that college professors be interested in individual students?

2 In the film, Natasha speaks about trying on the identity of art student by “dyeing her hair pink and rebelling.” Have you ever tried on an identity in order to fit into a new environment?

3 Do you think the typical college schedule allows the time and space for reflection? What factors get in the way of the search for meaning?

4 Brandon speaks eloquently about his profound loss and the resulting desire to be productive all the time. Do you stay busy to avoid looking at things that make you sad or uncomfortable? In what ways do you think experiencing silence can be an effective use of your time?

5 How did Taylor, Brandon and Natasha’s sense-of-self change throughout the film? What aspects of the class sparked their transformations the most?

6 Do you feel like you have the freedom to define and redefine yourself? How do cultural expectations define your identity? Think about cultural trends and peer expectations or fear. How do family expectations define your identity? Do you think it is possible to transcend these expectations?

7 How do you deal with obstacles in your life?

8 On what occasions do you hide your most authentic self from others? Do you know who you really are? Do others around you? Your friends? Your teachers? Your parents?

9 In the film, Val, the Wellness Director at CCS, acknowledges the need for mental health counseling on college campuses. She also makes reference to the “startling rate at which we are diagnosing and treating” college students. In her on-campus lectures, Professor Molly Beauregard says, “We continually ask what is wrong with students rather than what is wrong with the educational process?” Do you think rates of diagnosis would change if we were better able to design educational paradigms that meet individual student’s needs? Is this a realistic goal?

10 Professor Beauregard uses the analogy of wearing an electric fence dog collar and Velcro suit every time you leave the house to describe the way we shape our identities for the outside world. What kinds of boundaries do you cross in your everyday life? Do you think this metaphorical suit offers you protection or does it hold you back from certain interactions?

11 Consider the following quote: “We let the world tell us who we are rather than diving deep within ourselves, feeling our most authentic nature and coming out and showing that to the world.” What do you think is your most authentic nature?

12 Carl Jung wrote: “There is no coming to consciousness without pain. People will do anything, no matter how absurd, in order to avoid facing their own soul. One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.” Do you think expanding consciousness should be a goal of the educational process?

13 The Hindu text *The Bhagvad Gita* includes a verse that reads, “When the mind disciplined / By the practice of meditation becomes steady, / One becomes content in the Self by beholding Him / With (purified) intellect.” In what ways does the *Tuning the Student Mind* film echo this reflection?

14 Near the end of the film, Taylor expresses her desire to “be love.” Do you think that is a realistic sentiment?

15 Molly tells her students they are “perfect”. How do you define perfection? How is the idea of perfection relatable to consciousness?

16 What do you think of the concept of emotionality clouding the intellect? Do you think there are benefits to the heart and mind working together? If so, what are the benefits of this union?

17 What do you think Molly means when she refers to going beneath the layers of the thinking mind? Do you think you have ever had an experience of transcendence? If so, how did you get there?

18 Val refers to Molly’s curriculum as “revolutionary”. Do you agree? In what ways would meditating in the classroom and redefining individual concepts of identity be revolutionary?



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

CONNECT

The below websites comprise a select list of resources for use in implementing the Tuning the Student Mind curriculum or incorporating consciousness-based learning into the college classroom.

The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford University School of Medicine
www.ccare.stanford.edu

The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society
www.contemplativemind.org

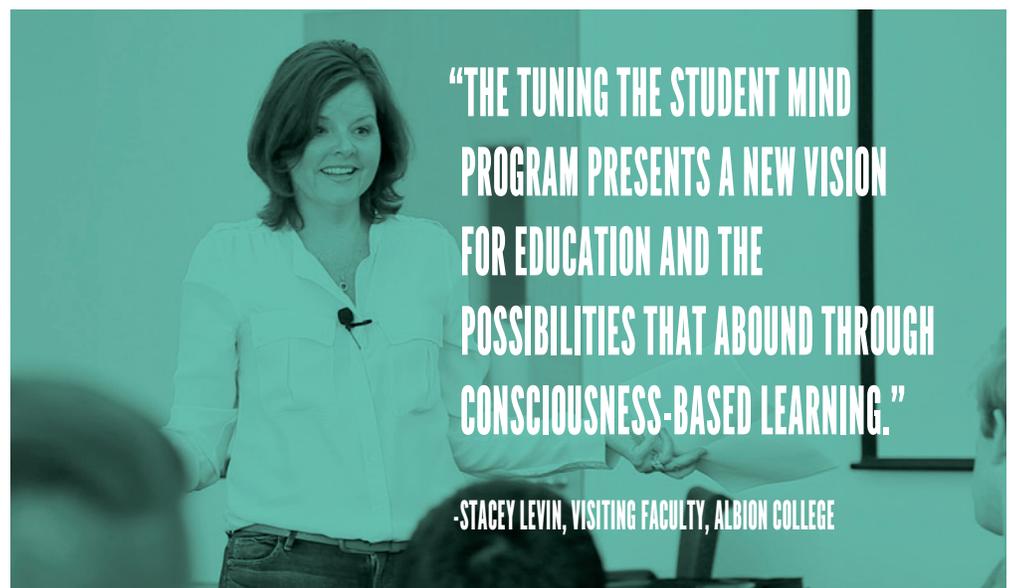
The Center for Investigating Health Minds at University of Wisconsin
www.investigatinghealthyminds.org

The Center for Koru Mindfulness
www.korumindfulness.org

The David Lynch Foundation
www.davidlynchfoundation.org

The Greater Good Science Center at University of California, Berkeley
www.greatergood.berkeley.edu

Life Force U
www.lifeforceu.org/about





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FOOTNOTES

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