



The Art of Learning *project* A JWF Council on Initiative

The Teacher's Guide to The Art of Learning: *Resilience*

**Developed by Katy Wells and the JWF
Team**





Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| A Note About the Guide | 3 |
| Introduction and overview – family letter | 4 |
| Resilience | 5 |
| Value Process Before Results (Chapters 3, 4, 10) | 5 |
| Value Process Before Results – family letter | 7 |
| Investment in Loss (Chapters 10, 18, 19, 20) | 8 |
| Investment in Loss – family letter | 10 |
| Beginner’s Mind (Chapters 8,9) | 11 |
| Beginner’s Mind – family letter | 13 |
| Using Adversity (Chapters 5, 12) | 14 |
| Using Adversity – family letter | 17 |



A Note About the Guide

The Teacher’s Guide, Resilience module is designed to support you in implementing four key learning principles in your classroom – Value Process Before Results, Investment in Loss, Beginner’s Mind, and Using Adversity.

The first step is to examine your own relationship to these learning principles in the sections entitled “Look Inward”. These are followed by “Actions” to take in the classroom, and “Daily Habits” to help you and your students incorporate the learning principles into your every day lives. Finally, there is a sample “Family Letter” to be sent home when you introduce each new concept. When working with the Daily Habits, we recommend that you choose one or two from each section that feel like a good fit, and practice them *every day*. Once they become truly habitual, you may choose to stretch yourself by incorporating another habit or two until eventually these concepts are no longer something to practice each day, but are woven into the fabric of your everyday lives.

We encourage you to make this work your own by focusing on the content that is most relevant to you and your colleagues. It is not designed to be a curriculum in its own right, but rather a collection of suggestions for ways in which you can incorporate these concepts into your existing curriculum. You may find it helpful to participate in group discussions and to keep a response journal as you work your way through the guide.

Our work with educators is constantly evolving, and your insight and experience play an enormous part in that growth. Please [share](#) with us the materials that you create – [lesson plans](#), [unit outlines](#), [creative assignments and more](#) – as well as the work your students produce in response to these learning principles. We believe that by sharing your own interpretations of these concepts, we, and the many educators with whom we work will continue to achieve higher levels of understanding and success with our students.

As always, we are here to support you—please don’t hesitate to contact us at info@jwfoundation.com

Enjoy!

Sincerely,

Katy Wells
Program Director - JW Foundation

To share materials - <http://theartoflearningproject.org/educate/contact-us/>

Resources for educators and coaches - <http://theartoflearningproject.org/educate/resources/for-educators-and-coaches/>



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Introduction and overview – family letter

Dear Families,

Our class is embarking on an exciting learning journey in which we will explore how our brains work, develop our strengths as learners, gain tools for improving our areas of need, and lay the foundation for a lifelong love of learning and a path to excellence!

We have begun a program with the [JW Foundation/Art of Learning Project](#), a non-profit educational initiative centered on the learning principles outlined by Josh Waitzkin in his book *The Art of Learning*. In this book, Waitzkin, an 8-time National Chess Champion in his youth and World Champion in the martial art of Tai Chi Chuan, developed a theory of learning based on a set of principles that enabled him to compete and excel at the highest level in two very disparate creative fields.

As a class, we will explore *The Art of Learning* principles as they relate to our own unique characters and learning styles. We encourage you to familiarize yourself with these learning principles as well, so that you can reinforce these important concepts at home. Visit the [resources section](#) of the Art of Learning Project website for a detailed description of each learning principle, download a free [Parent Guide](#) to learn how to use the principles at home, and read the letters that will come home as we introduce each new principle.

We look forward to this exciting new learning adventure and the incredible potential it will create for your child!

Sincerely,

Resources - <http://theartoflearningproject.org/educate/resources/>
Guide downloads - <http://theartoflearningproject.org/educate/guide-download/>

For further information about The Art of Learning Project, or to provide feedback about your child's experience, please send an email to info@jwfoundation.com or visit the website at <http://theartoflearningproject.org>.



Resilience

Value Process Before Results (Chapters 3, 4, 10)

“The key to pursuing excellence is to embrace an organic, long-term learning process, and not to live in a shell of static, safe mediocrity.” (p.33)

True learning occurs through a process of hard and sustained effort and a nuanced understanding of each challenge, gain, and loss along the way. Therefore, it is more important to draw insights from every step we take rather than focus on any end reward or goal. Labels like “winner”, “loser”, “smart” or “dumb” ignore this fact and should be avoided. They lock our sense of selves in place, strip us of motivation, and make it difficult to keep evolving.

LOOK INWARD:

1. How would you describe your relationship with being tested as a child and now, as an adult? What does it mean to you to be successful and how, if at all, has that changed over time?
2. What is your ultimate goal when you participate in competitive endeavors? How do you define growth and success with this goal in mind?

ACTIONS:

1. How do you define success and achievement in your classroom? How is it communicated to your students? Work on celebrating good process and growth as well as final outcomes.
2. Take note of your reactions to your students when they participate in class discussions, take a test, or otherwise take part in the process of learning. How do you respond to correct answers or successful results? To an incorrect answer or disappointing result? Note both your words and your physical response.
3. Make a point of giving process-oriented feedback. When you have a student for whom answers come easily, consider saying, “This must not have been the right question/task/problem for you. Let’s find something more challenging so you have the opportunity to really work on it.” This allows the student to see that the value is in the effort, not the outcome. With a student who must work very hard to learn and improve his skills, you might say, “Wow! You are putting a lot of effort into this. How exciting! What are some of the things you’ve discovered as you’ve been working?” This gives the student the opportunity to see the incremental steps he’s taken and successes he’s had along the path to the final outcome. When you have a student who is putting in a lot of effort and still not achieving success, in addition to helping her discover an improved strategy when appropriate, be sure to emphasize the value of her effort and the importance of



The Art of Learning *project* A W Consortium on Initiative

continuing to work toward her goal, “You have been working really hard on this. I know it can feel frustrating because you haven’t got it *yet*, but I know you’ll figure it out. Let’s look at some of the things you’ve already done that will help you and make a plan for what your next steps should be.”

4. As you plan for and teach a unit of study, be sure to create short-term goals for your students within the long-term process. Give regular feedback that emphasizes quality of process, effort, and incremental growth, with a secondary focus on progress toward the desired outcome.
5. Consider occasionally using an alternative form of grading that emphasizes the importance of the learning process, and of using an incremental approach. For example, after an assessment, have students go over their own ungraded work and identify the areas in which they need more practice and assistance. Score the assessment based on their ability to identify their areas of need, rather than their correct answers.
6. At the end of each week, set aside a time for the class to discuss the challenging moments that required extra effort, and celebrate them as steps toward higher levels of achievement. Over time, take note of how those challenges have positively affected your students’ development.

DAILY HABITS:

1. Give process-oriented feedback to at least 3 students every day. For example:
 - a. I see you’re working really hard on this...
 - b. It doesn’t seem like you’re putting a lot of effort into this. Let’s think about how I can help you stretch yourself a little further...
 - c. It’s really exciting to see/hear about how you’re approaching this problem. I can see you’re putting a lot of thought into it...
2. Have students practice giving process-oriented peer feedback during class discussions, group work, partner work, etc.
3. Each day, pose a question of the day and have students discuss how they would *approach* it (without giving the solution – no answers allowed!)
4. Daily “share”:
 - a. in which students (or teacher) describe their different approaches to the same problem/question, etc
 - b. in which students (or teacher) share something that was a challenge for them that day
5. Highlight a student of the day at the end of each class. Choose someone who has not yet reached his goal, but is using an innovative approach, attempting something new, demonstrating tireless effort, etc.



Value Process Before Results – family letter

“The key to pursuing excellence is to embrace an organic, long-term learning process, and not to live in a shell of static, safe mediocrity.” (p.33)

Dear Families,

This week we are beginning our exploration of the learning principle, [Value Process Before Results](#).

No matter what you are learning, you are engaging in a process that contains many incremental objectives along the path to the ultimate goal. It is important to understand that there is great value in the steps that lead up to learning something new, not just the final outcome. Along the path to learning, one encounters successes, losses, challenges, and trials. Each of these moments is important and should be given more attention than the final outcome.

As we learn to *Value Process Before Results* in class, we will begin to take note of these important steps along our learning paths and examine and celebrate them as we go. Some of the ways we plan to do this are to look at our long-term learning objectives and create short-term goals to help us reach our final destination, evaluate our own work for strengths and needs and identify the areas in which we need more support, and identify and celebrate the challenging moments we encounter each week as steps toward higher levels of achievement.

You can support this work at home by talking with your child about the challenging moments in his or her day and celebrating them as moments ripe with the potential for growth. Be aware of how you respond to both the wins and the disappointments in your child’s life – celebrate effort and growth, and focus on the steps taken along the way, rather than on the end result.

Sincerely,

Value Process Before Results - <http://theartoflearningproject.org/educate/resources/value-process-before-results/>

For further information about The Art of Learning Project, or to provide feedback about your child’s experience, please send an email to info@jwfoundation.com or visit the website at <http://theartoflearningproject.org>.



Investment in Loss (Chapters 10, 18, 19, 20)

“We need to put ourselves out there, give it our all, and reap the lesson, win or lose. The fact of the matter is that there will be nothing learned from any challenge in which we don’t try our hardest. Growth comes at the point of resistance. We learn by pushing ourselves and finding what really lies at the outer reaches of our abilities.” (p. 47)

We expand our minds and develop our capacities by allowing ourselves to confront hurdles, experience losses, and take a good hard look at them. Although stepping away from what is known, and taking risks can be uncomfortable, doing so affords rich opportunities for learning. A willingness to lose and analyze the loss, as well as the unsettled feelings that accompany it, cultivates flexibility. This, in turn, allows us to move forward and gain additional wisdom, no matter what we may encounter along our path.

LOOK INWARD:

1. Think about the last time you tried to learn a new skill. How did you react when you encountered difficulty? Did you persevere, approach the task from a new angle, step away, or give up? What was the thought process that led up to that reaction?
2. Take note of your emotional response when your child, a friend, or a co-worker is struggling or experiences a loss or disappointment. How do your emotions inform your reaction to that person?
3. Begin to track your responses to obstacles in your every day life. What does your reaction tell you about your relationship with loss? Consider whether or not the behavior you are modeling is something you want those around you to emulate.

ACTIONS:

1. Play a game or create an activity around the idea of letting go of old habits or methods. For example, have your students spend a short time writing with their non-dominant hands each day for a week. After each attempt, have them note what was difficult and think about how they can improve it next time. Compare handwriting samples from day one and day five to see growth.
2. When you make a mistake or are unsure of something in class, resist the urge to appear all-knowing and instead, acknowledge the “loss”. Then, have the students help you make a plan for how to rectify and grow from the situation.
3. As you begin a new school year or semester, take some time to plan for creating a classroom culture that celebrates mistakes as opportunities for growth. For younger students, consider having a student of the week chosen *because* he made a mistake, examined his missteps, and worked toward improving. For older



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students, you may choose to encourage this by offering extra credit or basing a percentage of the overall grade on students' efforts to learn and grow from their mistakes.

4. Build reflection into the daily life of your classroom. Be explicit and teach your students how to do this. You might consider having a [weekly routine](#), in which the class examines one student's work, discusses strengths, identifies challenges, and makes a plan together for how that student could improve.

DAILY HABITS:

1. At the end of each day have each student share with the class or a partner something they know or can do today that they couldn't yesterday.
2. Choose an activity in which you will stretch *yourself* just outside of your comfort zone every day (cardio interval training, communicating in a foreign language, learning a new musical instrument, etc). Share your experience with your students each day with a quick discussion of a moment that was challenging for you and how you think you'll change your approach next time. After modeling this for several weeks have the students begin to do the same.
3. Provide daily work choices in which students are given a selection of activities of different levels of difficulty. For younger children this could include leveled reading books just below, at, and above their independent reading level; writing paper with various degrees of writing vs. drawing space; puzzles and logic games. For older students you could also use puzzles and logic games; math games and activities; daily presentations using various formats such as written, poster, oral, etc. All of these will vary depending on your students' individual areas of strength and challenge. Allow your students the freedom to *choose* the level of challenge, but encourage stretch by praising those who push themselves rather than those who get everything "right". This allows you to begin a daily dialogue around the value of stretching and taking risks.
4. Actively praise students at least 3 times each day for taking a risk and stretching themselves outside of their comfort zone.
5. At the end of each class, choose a "mistake of the day" that you would like to highlight on the following day. Use the first part of the next class to give one on one support to the student in analyzing his mistake and developing a new approach, and be sure he is given ample time to successfully navigate this alternate method. At the end of that class, share the student's "mistake" as a wonderful example of positive change and growth.
As an alternative to the "mistake of the day" highlight a [famous historical error](#) each day and the resulting insight (the accidental discovery of penicillin, the invention of silly putty, the creation of chocolate chip cookies, the invention of the microwave oven, etc)

Math Problem of the Week routine - <http://theartoflearningproject.org/educate/math-problem-week-2/>

15 Life-Changing Inventions that were Created by Mistake - <http://www.businessinsider.com/these-10-inventions-were-made-by-mistake-2010-11?op=1>



Investment in Loss – family letter

“We need to put ourselves out there, give it our all, and reap the lesson, win or lose. The fact of the matter is that there will be nothing learned from any challenge in which we don’t try our hardest. Growth comes at the point of resistance. We learn by pushing ourselves and finding what really lies at the outer reaches of our abilities.” (p. 47)

Dear Families,

This week we are beginning our exploration of the learning principle, [Investment in Loss](#).

Growth and improvement don’t occur in a vacuum. In order to truly excel in any discipline, one must be willing to take a good hard look at past performance and mistakes made, and develop a plan for how to approach the situation differently the next time. The key to helping children develop a growth-oriented relationship with their mistakes is to remove the negative stigma from the idea of loss and to teach them to examine those mistakes through a positive lens.

As we learn to *Invest in Loss* in class, we will begin to explore the value in letting go of old habits and methods in order to try something in a new way. As a community, we will look at mistakes as opportunities for growth and celebrate students who examine their missteps with an eye toward change.

You can support this work at home by encouraging your child to view both successes and disappointments as steps along a much longer path – one in which they must constantly re-examine and re-evaluate their choices. When your child does suffer a loss or disappointment, allow her to process her feelings, and then work together to make a plan for how to do it better next time. Encourage your child to be reflective in all areas of his life and to [view mistakes as exciting opportunities for growth](#). Help your child embrace the idea that the willingness to take risks is an essential ingredient to growth, and that staying within one’s comfort zone, while easier, results in stagnation.

Sincerely,

Investment in Loss - <http://theartoflearningproject.org/educate/resources/investment-in-loss/>

Power of Mistakes article - <http://community.mindsetworks.com/blog-page/home-blogs/entry/the-power-of-mistakes-creating-a-risk-tolerant-culture-at-home-and-school>

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Beginner's Mind (Chapters 8,9)

“A key component of high-level learning is cultivating a resilient awareness that is the older, conscious embodiment of a child’s playful obliviousness.” (p. 79)

Children learning to crawl approach their surroundings with unstoppable curiosity and an eager, joyful sense of adventure. They have no concern for how they look or the judgments of others. What propels them forward is a general delight in all that is unfamiliar; an ability to be intrigued by the mundane; and a desire to probe minute details along their path. The best learning results from this kind of openness—from being fully awake to the experience at hand, receptive to gaining even tiny insights from it and to refining one’s method in response. A willingness to adopt the nonresistant approach of a beginner and gradually improve one’s knowledge manifests outwardly as forward movement and, over time, as graceful expertise.

LOOK INWARD:

1. What is your emotional response to being a beginner at this stage of your life? Do you experience it differently if you are in a public forum vs. private? Learning alone or in a group?
2. Can you recall a time in your adult life that you approached learning something new with a childlike perspective? What enabled you to take this approach? What was the effect that this approach had on your learning?
3. Journal about the *last* time you learned something new. Did you approach it with an open mind? How did you handle setbacks? Write about a specific example of something you would do differently using a Beginner’s Mind approach.

ACTIONS:

1. How do you introduce a new and potentially challenging concept, activity or project to your students? Your relationship to it will set the tone for the class. Be aware of the effect of your language and physical responses so that they emphasize the excitement of discovery and reflect your belief in a joyful and non-resistant approach to learning.
2. Develop an activity in which the students teach a new skill to a partner, or to the teacher. If you are the one learning the skill, model how you approach it with an open mind and an eagerness to learn and grow. Encourage the student partnerships to do the same.
3. Offer an extra credit assignment in which students choose an activity, art, sport, etc. that they’ve always wanted to learn, but haven’t yet. Have them journal about the process of being a beginner and share it with each other.
4. Familiarize yourself with [Carol Dweck’s research on mindset](#) and the importance of developing an incremental (or growth) mindset versus entity (or fixed) for both



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yourself as a teacher and for your students. This framework has a dramatic effect on students' willingness to embrace a leap into the unknown, which is essential for any kind of learning that requires one to become a beginner again, such as geometry, algebra, trigonometry, foreign language, etc.

5. Those students who are already working under an entity theory will be less inclined to take on learning that requires them to be a beginner again. Take some time at the beginning of each new year or semester to [assess the mindset of each of your students](#) so that you are prepared to address and work toward changing these students' theories of themselves as learners.

DAILY HABITS:

1. Begin each day with a partner or group share of something new each person is going to try that day (could be academic, social, physical, etc.)
2. Choose a new activity that *you* will begin to learn (yoga, meditation, painting, etc) and take note of the sense of freedom and lack of ego you feel as a beginner in the learning process. During the initial weeks and months of learning this new art, explore how you can translate that feeling of freedom to a domain in which you have more experience and investment, such as teaching. Work on developing an equally open and egoless relationship with growing and improving in this discipline in which you are already skilled. This can lead to a daily dialogue with your students around the idea that while *they* are improving and learning more about something new each day, you too are stretching your skills as a teacher.
3. Begin each class by attempting something simple you've never done before in order to model an open-minded approach and to remind yourself of what your students feel each day. For example,
 - a. Have a student teach you a new dance move
 - b. Learn to say a word or phrase in a language you don't speak and try to use it throughout the class or day
4. For younger students, have them approach the meeting area or transition from one part of the room to another in a different way each time (using a silly walk, taking a new route, etc.)



Beginner's Mind – family letter

“A key component of high-level learning is cultivating a resilient awareness that is the older, conscious embodiment of a child’s playful obliviousness.” (p. 79)

Dear Families,

This week we are beginning our exploration of the learning principle, [Beginner's Mind](#).

When we were babies we approached the world with open hearts and open minds. Every experience was a new one and so we scooted, crawled, and waddled forward with an eager excitement to discover what would happen next, and with no regard to what might go wrong. Only as we get older do we begin to develop a fear of the unknown, the potential for embarrassment and failure. This fear, though helpful in preventing us from falling off the edge of a cliff or running into traffic with our eyes closed, also holds us back from truly throwing ourselves headfirst into new experiences.

As we learn to develop a *Beginner's Mind* in class, we will work toward rediscovering our early childlike approach to trying something new. We will focus on becoming incremental theorists, with the all-important growth mindset outlined in the work of [Carol Dweck](#). Incremental theorists understand that one's skill set is not fixed (I'm good at math, I'm not good at art), but rather our abilities and “talents” are malleable and expandable and can be improved through effort and hard work. Your child will be encouraged to dive into learning new skills without concern for potential mistakes or losses.

You can support this work at home by encouraging your child's attempts at new discoveries with enthusiasm and an open mind. Refrain from offering advice and correcting missteps, and enjoy your child's journey toward learning something new. Consider how you [praise](#) your child for a job well done, and be sure your focus is on effort rather than outcome. When your child is working on something new and difficult, say “Wow, you're really putting a lot of time and effort into figuring that out. I'm proud of you for working so hard.” If she is struggling, note the improvements she's made so far and remind her that even though she hasn't got it [yet](#), she will get there eventually. When something comes very easily to your child, suggest that he might enjoy something more challenging, “You did that so quickly. Let's have fun and make it more of a challenge so you get the chance to really work on it.” You may consider embarking on a project or taking a class along with your child so that you can experience being beginners together. Take the time to familiarize yourself with the concepts of [entity versus incremental theories of intelligence](#) and think about your own approach to learning as well as your child's.

Sincerely,

Beginner's Mind - <http://theartoflearningproject.org/educate/resources/beginners-mind/>

A Study on Praise and Mindsets video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWv1VdDeoRY>

The Power of Yet video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-swZaKN2lc>

Theory of Intelligence article - <http://www.parentingscience.com/theory-of-intelligence.html>

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Using Adversity (Chapters 5, 12)

“In performance training, first we learn to flow with whatever comes. Then we learn to use whatever comes to our advantage. Finally, we learn to be completely self-sufficient and create our own earthquakes, so our mental process feeds itself explosive inspirations without the need for outside stimulus.” (p. 54)

Being able to handle life’s dirty tricks without losing one’s equanimity, interest, and joy is vital to learning and achievement. The ability to call on one’s knowledge and apply it well is disrupted when we fall prey to emotional disturbances. Rather than deny or stifle emotions, we must work to gain an understanding of them, learn to make peace with them, and ultimately channel them into higher levels of performance. By keeping our cool under trying conditions, we can arrive at precise conclusions and take positive and effective action at all times, especially during the most complicated and critical moments.

LOOK INWARD:

1. Think of a time when you were able to maintain serenity when faced with a challenging situation. What allowed you to do so?
2. Consider your emotional state the last time you experienced conflict, and did not maintain serenity. How did you express your emotions in that situation? Work on developing strategies that will improve your ability to remain calm in these situations without denying your emotions.

ACTIONS:

1. Focused breathing and visualization are powerful tools for dealing with adversity. Here are several steps for teaching your students to harness the power of their breath in trying situations. It is important that you do not *initially* connect this work with challenging situations to ensure that the breath work itself does not become its own negative trigger.
 - a. Begin to practice the following routine when your students are at their *most relaxed* and are not in the throes of a difficult or stressful situation (in other words, when they need it the least). Practice this breath work in a relaxed state for 30 seconds at a time for the first week, 60 seconds for the second week, and continue to gradually expand the time spent on the routine over the course of a month – eventually working up to 4 or 5 minutes.
 - b. Once your students have a firm grasp on the breath work routine, begin to harness it several times throughout the school day and encourage them to practice it during relaxed moments at home as well.
 - c. Finally, when your students have a solid understanding of the routine in a relaxed state, begin to introduce it at times when you see that the class has



begun to lose focus. This will eventually lead to teaching students to use breath work as a way to regain focus and composure in adverse situations.

2. *Breath Work Routine:* Have the students sit comfortably with their hands in their laps and their eyes closed. A [chime](#) with a long resonating tone can be helpful for focus. If you are using a chime, the first ring is a signal to close eyes and begin to focus on breathing while listening to the resonance. Tell your students, “As you breathe, put a hand on your belly and feel your breath going in and out. Then, drop your hand, but continue to feel your breath filling your belly and then emptying out again. If your mind begins to wander, go back to feeling your breath in your belly.” The second chime is a signal to open their eyes.
3. Discuss the importance of being able to regain composure and concentration and to “shake it off” when your students lose focus and experience stress. Develop a chart of appropriate in-class activities students can utilize in these situations (e.g. getting a sip of water, practicing deep breathing, stretching, etc.) These physical [activities](#) may work well with younger children. For older students, whole class activities like these brief [stretching techniques](#) may be helpful.
4. Develop a small group activity in which students must work together to meet a challenge within a set of parameters that requires flexible thinking – share the results with the class. As they work together, help them think about how to use any frustration they experience at the challenge of working together as a motivator.

DAILY HABITS:

1. Begin your *own* day with a focused breathing routine like the one mentioned above. Practice it every day when you first wake up or first arrive in your classroom. Commit to practicing this routine for 10 minutes a day for 10 days with the help of a guided meditation app such as [Headspace](#).
2. Identify a challenging moment in your own life in which you maintained a calm and clear head and were able to achieve your goal. Take a few minutes each day to practice visualizing that moment. Have your students identify their own moments and practice the visualization routine as a class for 30 seconds each day.
3. After several weeks of practicing the breathing routine mentioned above with your students, introduce a daily “check in” at its beginning and end. Have your students take no more than one minute to sit quietly and take note of how they are feeling and how their emotions manifest in their bodies before the breathing routine, and then observe how they feel directly after, taking note of how those feelings have changed.
4. Once the students have cultivated this breath work, they can begin to connect it to other moments in the classroom and their lives. Help them make this connection by incorporating a quick stretch with 3 deep breaths into each transition moment in your classroom.



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5. End each class period or day with a reflection on the emotional challenges of the day and the steps taken to move through and beyond them. Help your students see that, in challenging situations, adversity sparks new understanding. If conditions were perfect and there was no conflict, they would not come up with the same ideas. This will help them begin to embrace adversity as something that leads to improvement.

You may need to model this for students at first (for example: “In the beginning of our partner work time J and K were struggling with a disagreement over how to approach the problem. After some conversation they were able to come to a compromise about how to approach it and did some great partner work together. In fact, by talking through their different approaches they came up with something unique and exciting.”). You may choose to have students reflect silently, rather than aloud after you have modeled how to do so.

Online meditation timer - <http://www.onlinemeditationtimer.com/>

In-School Activity Breaks for younger children - <https://school.fueluptoplay60.com/tools/view.php?id=15749467>

Simple yoga stretches for older students - <http://99u.com/articles/6999/6-simple-yoga-stretches-for-daily-de-stressing>

Headspace – <http://www.headspace.com>



Using Adversity – family letter

“In performance training, first we learn to flow with whatever comes. Then we learn to use whatever comes to our advantage. Finally, we learn to be completely self-sufficient and create our own earthquakes, so our mental process feeds itself explosive inspirations without the need for outside stimulus.” (p. 54)

Dear Families,

This week we will begin our exploration of the learning principle [Using Adversity](#).

The optimal learning environment is different for each of us. For some, quiet tranquility is a necessity, while others thrive on energetic stimulation. What is true for everyone across the board, however, is that none of us will have access to our optimal environment every time we want it. Noises will interrupt us, pencils will break, rainstorms will delay the game, and our emotions will attempt to muddy our thinking. We can't change the realities of existing within the world, but we can learn to flow with distractions and even use them to our advantage. In *The Art of Learning*, Josh describes a chess tournament in Calicut, India during which an earthquake forced people to evacuate the building. He, however, had a revelatory experience of pure engagement and insight during the earthquake. This experience led him to explore the power of using seemingly adverse situations to spur oneself on to greater levels of creativity and inspiration.

As we learn to *Use Adversity* in class, we will practice flexible thinking through group work and learn to use the challenges we encounter as motivation. We will develop techniques we can use within the classroom and at home to deal with stress and regain focus in trying situations. We will also begin to learn a focused breathing technique that will in time help us regain composure and strengthen our clarity of mind in any environment.

You can support this work at home by helping your child to identify and name her emotions and their triggers as she experiences them. Ask your child to share with you some of the techniques he has practiced in class and try to incorporate them into your own responses to trying situations at home. If you are interested in deepening your understanding and experience of breath work, you may want to consider using a [meditation app such as Headspace](#).

Sincerely,

Using Adversity - <http://theartoflearningproject.org/educate/resources/using-adversity/>

Headspace – <http://www.headspace.com>

For further information about The Art of Learning Project, or to provide feedback about your child's experience, please send an email to info@jwfoundation.com or visit the website at <http://theartoflearningproject.org>