

## News & Announcements

### Summer Studies

Our tutors keep tutoring through the summer months.

- ▶ Get ahead for next school year.
- ▶ Review topics from this year.
- ▶ Learn something completely new.

Please contact us for more details.

### Newsletter

Our tutors keep tutoring, but our writers take a break through the summer months. “The Smart Connection” will return in September with more topics to support students, parents and educators.

### June Provincial Exams

#### June 20, 2007

English 10  
BC First Nations Studies 12  
Civic Studies 11  
English 12

#### June 21, 2007

Japanese 12  
German 12  
Punjabi 12  
Spanish 12  
Applications of Math 12  
Geology 12

Tech. & Professional Comm. 12

#### June 22, 2007

Francais langue premiere 10  
Social Studies 11  
Science humaines 11  
Communications 12

English Literature 12  
Principles of Math 12

#### June 25, 2007

Applications of Math 10  
Essentials of Math 10  
Principles of Math 10  
Biology 12

#### June 26, 2007

Science 10  
Geography 12  
Chemistry 12

#### June 27, 2007

French 12  
Physics 12

#### June 28, 2007

History 12  
Mandarin Chinese 12  
Francais langue premiere 12

**Good Luck on Your Exams!**

## Vacation, Meditation and the Value of Time Off

by Dahlia Miller

*This month's edition takes a look at the need for time off. While vacation and time away from school can rest the physical body, quietening the mind can be a source of regeneration and energy for students even in the midst of work. Like a car battery that re-charges itself as it runs, a mind familiar with meditation techniques can constantly tap its most potent energy source – present moment awareness. Some simple meditation techniques especially suited to students are described at the end of the article.*

*“Every now and then go away and have a little relaxation. To remain constantly at work will diminish your judgment.”*

Leonardo DaVinci

Vacation and time off are important components of a student's life. Besides freedom to rest and recuperate, vacation allows the mind time for integration and synthesis.

Just considering academic load, the sheer quantity of what students are expected to learn these days is impressive. Time away from school can give the student's hard-working brain the option to reflect and let information sink in.

Sometimes it feels like pushing is the best way to be productive. Our world moves quickly and favours busyness. But this go, go, go attitude is not truly healthy, balanced or sustainable. If we are constantly rushing forward, moving to the next task, present-moment clarity will be elusive. We need to know how to slow down and attend to the present moment, so that decisions can be clear and appropriate.

Our mind is a tool. Like a saw, if our mind is constantly in use, it grows dull. Taking time to rest, allowing the mind to quiet, sharpens the saw. Then when our attention is turned back to the task at hand, it can be focused and more effective.

A balance needs to be struck. If students push too hard and too long, their minds lose their sharpness. With too much time off, on the other hand, students lose discipline and familiarity with newly learned material. By learning some basic meditation techniques, students can learn to be at rest even in the midst of work. How else will they be equipped to deal with the fast pace of modern life – competing for post-secondary positions with middle and high school students who study 12 and 14 hours per day in some countries?

Below is a brief description of some benefits of meditation and a few simple meditation techniques. Practised along with proper rest and self-care, meditation can provide reprieve, enhancing the efforts of students while in school and on vacation. Life is not all seriousness and work. Hopefully we can learn to approach all our tasks with a sense of playfulness and joy. (See the May 2004 edition of “The Smart Connection” for more on “The Value of Play”.)

### Benefits of Meditation

We have the benefit of living in a self-repairing system – we are amazing! If we care for ourselves well we can do a lot. Yet, have you ever taken time off and still not felt rested? When we calm our minds, allowing a few quiet moments of relaxation, our bodies begin to repair themselves and gather energy.

If we over-work, lose sleep or become stressed, our abilities in decision-making, problem solving, motivation, hand-eye coordination, and attention to detail are compromised. An over-active mind, an over-stressed system, does not operate well. Meditation calms the body and the spirit, slowing the breathing and the pulse-rate. After just a few minutes or even just a few mindful breaths, the body feels more relaxed and the mind becomes better able to focus.

## About Us

### Our Mission Is:

- ▶ To provide top quality, flexible learning support and service to students and parents through:

*In-home private tutoring matched specifically to each student's needs.*

*Stimulating workshops building skills in a practical and creative way.*

- ▶ To enhance students' skills and increase learning confidence through one-on-one support that is truly individualized, recognizing each student's unique abilities.
- ▶ To improve the quality of life, in individuals and communities through education.

**Our tutors** are certified teachers and professionals. They are carefully screened and chosen specially to match the needs and learning styles of each student.

*We support families in education.*

For more information and resources, visit us on-line at:

[www.SmartTutorReferrals.com](http://www.SmartTutorReferrals.com)

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Meditation can provide perspective, allowing fresh ideas to bubble up. Have you ever strained to remember something, only to have it come to you when you were no longer trying so hard? Freshness and clarity arrive when we loosen the reins on our mind, allowing it to relax into the present moment without effort.

As we practise meditation regularly, amazing things happen: the mind begins to chatter less, we become more able to focus our attention – this single-pointedness allowing us to blast through previous confusion like lightening.

### What Meditation Isn't

Meditation isn't a blanked mind. It is the brain's nature to think thoughts, it would be very, very difficult to actually blank the mind; meditation allows thoughts to come and go without following them or getting distracted by them.

Meditation isn't time-consuming and difficult. It can be as simple as breathing or listening to the sounds around oneself. A few moments of calm awareness can bring great benefit.

Meditation doesn't leave one cold and distant. Since meditation helps to bring attention to what is happening in the present moment, it can actually help to develop one's ability to be natural with what is happening (it's easier to laugh when one is paying attention to the joke).

Meditation isn't a sign of weakness. Great thinkers and accomplished people throughout history have developed their skills through one-pointed concentration. In fact, through meditation, the power of mind can be focussed, like sunlight through a magnifying glass, bringing great clarity.

### Simple Meditation Techniques

*There are so many forms that meditation can take. The key point is to bring awareness to what is happening in the present moment. Here are some examples of meditations that can suit students quite nicely since they are all quick and can be done at any time – in class, during an exam, before homework, etc.*

▶ Following the breath, label the in-breath "one" and the out-breath "one", then the next in-breath "two" and out-breath "two", and so on up to "five". If you'd like to continue, start again counting your next in-breath "one".

▶ Sit quietly, upright and relaxed with both feet on the floor. Breathe deeply for one or two breaths. Turn your attention to the bottoms of your feet. With your mind, sense the bottoms of your feet on the floor or in your shoes. With your mind, feel the backs of your legs on the chair. Feel your back against the chair; feel your head resting on your shoulders; feel your belly and chest rise with an in-breath. Repeat, if you like.

▶ Sit quietly, relaxed and breathe deeply for one or two breaths. Ask yourself, "I wonder what I will think next?" Then watch for the next thought. Don't follow the thought, simply see it rise like a bubble and float away. Then ask again, "I wonder what my next thought will be?" This practice can help you to gain more of a sense of distance from your thoughts: you are not your thoughts. The space between thoughts (whether one milli-second or ten seconds) is a well of still waters that you can tap into.

▶ Sit quietly and relaxed. When you hear something, in your mind say, "hearing". When you think something, in your mind say, "thinking". When you feel an emotion, in your mind say, "feeling". This labeling can help you to recognize what is happening around you and within you. It will be easier for you to discriminate between what is actually happening (for example, writing an exam) and what is going on in your mind (for example, fear or a memory of a previous bad experience with an exam).

▶ Notice what is around you. Where are you? Are you standing or sitting? Feel your feet on the ground. Is there a smell in the air? Can you feel a breeze? What noises can you hear? How do your clothes feel – are they loose or tight, soft or scratchy? Are the muscles in your face relaxed or tense?

*"The bigger the summer vacation the harder the fall."*

Anonymous

*"Get out of the blocks, run your race, stay relaxed. If you run your race, you'll win. Channel your energy. Focus."*

Carol Lewis, American Athlete