

Gracious Space

A spirit and setting where we connect with the stranger to learn in public.

Spirit

Bringing the spirit of **Gracious Space** to any place means that, as individual and a collective, we invite and welcome each other to fully participate. We exude compassion, joy, hope, curiosity, and humor. When we bring these elements with us into relationships and collective spaces, we are “being” and enacting Gracious Space.

Setting

Gracious Space has a physical dimension that can support or impede our ability to feel productive, healthy, and connected with our work and with others. A gracious space that appeals to the five senses and invites a spirit of the sixth sense of intuition, creativity, and imagination. What is gracious about the place you are in right now? What about your workspace? What would make it more gracious? Paying attention to simple hospitality (food, drink) and items that reflect your energy and personality, or goals for work (visual) create a unique Gracious Space.

Connect with the Stranger/Invite the Stranger

Gracious Space has a “systems” perspective when we invite the “stranger.” Borrowed from Parker Palmer, the term “stranger” refers to any individual who is not typically involved in the conversation; someone with a different background, perspective, race, gender, culture, ability, sexual orientation, geographic origin, or any other quality that may make the person seem different. Inviting the ‘stranger’ often means opening up to include a new idea or perspective. We need the “stranger” inside us and ideas from others when we are considering complexity and innovation; we need multiple perspectives to broaden our viewpoints before decision-making before we take actions that are too narrow or short-term. And it’s good to remember that we and our ideas are often strange to someone else.

Learn in Public

The second “systems” approach of **Gracious Space** is to apply deep listening and learning. Learning in Public requires humility, a willingness to explore assumptions, let go of the “right way” of doing things, and being willing to change one’s mind. Be transparent and be willing to say you made a mistake or apologize. Gracious Space has the potential to transform the human heart and entire groups or organizations. When we choose graciousness, we choose an approach that fosters understanding. We choose to be open-minded and welcoming of diverse opinions. This attitude grows within us and can be nurtured through practice.

Gracious Space is rooted in work from The Center for Ethical Leadership.

<https://www.ethicalleadership.org/gracious-space.html>

Dynamic Mindfulness: Evidence-based/Trauma-informed/Equity-driven

From Niroga Institute (www.niroga.org)

In a systematic review of multiple practices that claim to improve executive functions (EFs; skills that include working memory, self-control, focused attention, and cognitive flexibility), mindfulness practices that involve movement were found to be THE most effective (Diamond & Ling, 2019). Since stress impairs EFs, one reason mindfulness practices involving movement may help EFs most is because they reduce stress.

The ABCs of Dynamic Mindfulness support key principles and goals of schooling.

Dynamic Mindfulness		Implications for Schools
A Mindful Actions and Movements	Using our bodies to address stress and trauma in our muscles and tissues increases self-awareness and increases equitable access for increased student readiness.	Actions to increase equitable access and achievement.
B Breathing Techniques	Breathing deeply decreases the fight-or-flight response and restores the ability to listen, think, learn, and fully participate.	Breathing to expand joy and justice into schools and communities.
C Centering Practices	By centering ourselves, we strengthen our ability to take care of ourselves and listen in community to another and to collectively address systemic barriers to learning.	Centering on self-care to learn, teach, and lead for social justice.