

## 60-Second SoTL

### Episode 87 – Sit Spot Mindfulness

#### Featured Article

Bitting, Kelsey S., Jill McSweeney, Elyssa Kaufman, and Kira Campagna. 2026. "Evaluating the Impact of a Sit Spot Mindfulness Practice on Students' Connectedness to Nature, Mental Wellbeing, and Mindfulness." *Innovative Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-026-09917-1>

#### Transcript

(Music)

0:10

#### Jessie L. Moore:

Can an outdoor mindfulness practice help college students feel more connected, less stressed, and more engaged in learning? That's the focus of this week's 60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning. I'm Jessie Moore.

(Music)

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In "Evaluating the Impact of a Sit Spot Mindfulness Practice on Students' Connectedness to Nature, Mental Wellbeing, and Mindfulness," Kelsey Bitting, Jill McSweeney, Elyssa Kaufman, and Kira Campagna explore how a repeated nature-based mindfulness practice influenced college students' wellbeing and learning. Their study appears in *Innovative Higher Education* as an open-access article.

0:55

The study addresses a growing concern in higher education: college students are experiencing significant mental health challenges, including stress, anxiety, and depression that can affect both wellbeing and academic success. In response, faculty are increasingly exploring pedagogies of care, including those guided by *biophilia*—the idea that humans have an innate tendency to connect with nature. Previous research has linked both mindfulness practices and exposure to natural environments with improvements in mood, stress reduction, and wellbeing. The researchers wondered what might happen if they intentionally combined those approaches in classroom learning.

1:36

To explore that question, the researchers implemented a “sit spot” assignment in two undergraduate courses at a liberal arts university in the southeastern United States. One course, *Humans & Nature*, focused on environmental studies and sustainability. The second course, *Perspectives in Personal and Global Health*, explored holistic health and wellbeing.

1:57

In both courses, students selected an outdoor location and visited it eight times over the course of a month. During each visit, they spent about 10 to 20 minutes quietly observing their surroundings, noticing sensory details, reflecting on their emotions and physical reactions, and journaling about the experience.

Before beginning the assignment independently, students participated in a guided mindfulness session outdoors. Instructors encouraged students to pay attention to their breathing, sensory experiences, and thoughts without judgment.

2:30

To study the impact of the sit spot mindfulness assignment, the researchers used an IRB-approved mixed-methods design. Students completed pre- and post-surveys measuring positive and negative affect, mindfulness, and nature connectedness. Students also wrote reflections describing their experiences with the sit spots and the ways the practice influenced their wellbeing, learning, and relationships with nature.

2:54

Students who completed the full set of sit spots showed statistically significant increases in positive affect, nature connectedness, and mindfulness. Students frequently described becoming more present and attentive to their surroundings. Many reported feeling calmer, more peaceful, and more self-aware. Some students described developing new habits of spending intentional time outdoors, while others reflected on how the activity helped them slow down and manage stress.

One student wrote that the sit spots became “a break from the chaos of life,” while others reflected on reconnecting with nature and reconnecting with themselves.

3:34

The researchers suggest that this kind of low-cost, adaptable assignment could be implemented across disciplines as part of a more holistic approach to teaching and learning. In a time when many students are struggling with stress, burnout, and disconnection, intentionally creating opportunities for mindfulness, reflection, and engagement with the natural world may support not only wellbeing—but also learning itself.

The authors recommend that instructors consider implementing sit spots or similar reflective nature-based practices regularly over time, rather than as one-time activities, to help students experience the greatest benefits.

4:11

And perhaps one of the most important takeaways from this study is that pedagogies of wellness do not always require major curricular redesigns. Sometimes meaningful learning begins with something much simpler: slowing down, paying attention, and noticing the world around us.

To learn more about this study, visit our show notes for a link to the open access article.

4:31

(Music)

4:37

**Jessie L. Moore:**

Join us for our next episode of 60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning for another snapshot of recent scholarship of teaching and learning. Learn more about the Center at [www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org](http://www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org).

(Music)