





MINDFULNESS WORKSHOP Children's Creativity Museum

PROJECT BACKGROUND

This public program was developed as part of a three-year project, *Think Write Publish— Science & Religion.* Through a series of programs, fellowships, and a writing competition, the project sought to explore the relationship and intersections between science and religion. Rejecting a common narrative that the two are necessarily at odds, this project explored a different proposition: that science and religion can reinforce each other to allow a more nuanced, profound, and rewarding experience of our world and our place in it.

The project resulted in 12 creative nonfiction stories, as well as five experimental public programs designed to promote productive conversations about the relationship of science and religion in museums and other cultural spaces. Each program was inspired by one of the project's creative nonfiction stories, and was designed for a different audience using an appropriate programmatic format. The public programs were held in communities across the United States: Phoenix, Arizona (led by Arizona State University); San Francisco, California (Children's Creativity Museum); Durham, North Carolina (Museum of Life and Science); Boston, Massachusetts (Museum of Science); and Saint Paul, Minnesota (Science Museum of Minnesota). In addition to providing a safe space for multiple and diverse audiences to consider the relationship of science and religion, a larger goal of the programmatic effort was to explore techniques for addressing potentially polarizing topics in ways that are constructive and build bridges among different perspectives and experiences.

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This package contains:

- Program overview document
- Summary of program evaluation findings
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- Mindfulness Breathing Activity: Make a Pinwheel
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- Mindfulness Noticing Activity: Tessellations and Patterns
- Mindfulness Reflection Activity: Mandala Making

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Title: *Mindfulness Workshop* Target audience: Families Format: Hands-on activities Setting: Museum classroom Length of program: 1 hour or longer (drop-in program)

Inspired by: *Sounding the Sacred in New York City,* a creative nonfiction story by Catherine Fletcher.

Program overview: Families explore mindfulness through a set of hands-on activities that take a multi-sensory approach to becoming self-aware. Each activity also explores the connection of mindfulness to neuroscience and religion practice, and builds a bridge between these ways of thinking.

Story summary: Catherine Fletcher's story, *Sounding the Sacred in New York City,* describes her experiences seeking relief from migraine headaches through chanting and other religious practices that combine mindfulness and sound.

Program key ideas: The key word to understanding mindfulness is awareness. Kids can benefit from mindfulness by filtering out stress and distractions to focus on the present. Mindfulness has roots in both neuroscience and religion.

Program goals: Participants will:

- Find the program to be interesting and relevant;
- Consider conversations about the relationship of science and religion to be timely and important;
- Experience insight(s) or new ideas about the relationship between science and religion;
- Reflect on their own values and consider the relationship of science and religion in their own lives.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- Mindfulness Workshop Event Sign and Nametags
- What is Mindfulness and Background Information
- Hands-on activities (each one includes materials list and instructions):
 - Mindfulness Breathing Activity: Make A Pinwheel
 - Mindfulness Listening Activity: Mystery Sound Shakers
 - o Mindfulness Noticing Activity: Tessellations and Patterns
- Mindfulness Reflection Activity: Mandala Making (includes materials list and instructions)

PROGRAM NOTES

These program materials include three hands-on mindfulness activity and one reflection activity. The three hands-on activities can be used as a workshop, individually, or in combination with other family programs. The reflection activity provides families an opportunity to contribute their own thoughts and feelings about mindfulness during a workshop. Each of these activities has its own guide, with a materials list, instructions, safety, and facilitation notes.

There are fascinating science, religion and cultural connections for each of the three hands-on activities presented in the activity signs. These illustrations and short content messages can be helpful for both facilitators and families to explore the topic of mindfulness. More information on mindfulness and activity connections can be found in the What is Mindfulness - Background Information guide.

The advanced planning and set up for the mindfulness workshop is modest. All suggested materials are readily available and low-cost. A typical setup might include one activity and facilitator at each table. If possible, find a relaxed and quiet environment for the workshop. Playing soothing background music is also encouraged. All facilitators participating in the workshop should read the background info, activity signs, and notes before the event. An event

sign and nametag templates are included for further workshop branding possibilities. After the workshop, clean up scrap materials and store activity materials.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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CREDITS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Inspired by an original creative nonfiction story, *Sounding the Sacred in New York City,* by Catherine Fletcher.

Museum Liaison for the project is Rae Ostman at Arizona State University.

Director of the project and programming is Michael Zirulnik at Arizona State University.

Program evaluation conducted by the University Office of Evaluation and Educational Effectiveness at Arizona State University.

MINDFULNESS WORKSHOP Background Information

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

The key word to understanding mindfulness is **awareness**. Being mindful is being aware and noticing your **thoughts**, **senses**, and **feelings** and anything happening **right now** around you.

Kids can benefit from mindfulness by filtering out stress and distractions to focus on the present. Many experts and guides agree the first step of mindfulness is knowing your body and surroundings. These three activities take a multi-sensory approach to assist kids in becoming more self-aware through breathing, hearing, and seeing.

Mindfulness has its roots deep within both neuroscience and religion, and builds a bridge between both ways of thinking. Each activity has its own connection detailed below.

Mindfulness Breathing Activity – Make a Pinwheel						
Goals	Science connections	Cultural and religious connections				
Discover stress-relieving and healthy deep breathing techniques by making and using a pinwheel.	The breath is the body's natural stress reliever. Slow breathing and long exhales cause the vagus nerve in your neck to slow down your sympathetic nervous system. Because this part of your nervous system prepares you for a "flight or fight" response to stress, reducing its activity will lower your heart rate and blood pressure. This also slows the release of stress hormones.	Many religions and cultures use slow breathing to focus. Scientists have shown that even short periods of meditation, using breathing as a focus, can change the body's stress response. Many religions use breathing in meditation and prayer practices. For example, pranayama, is a type of breathing exercise found in Indo-Tibetan meditation traditions. Practitioners believe these exercises expand the capacity of the lungs, massage the heart, and increase the supply of rich arterial blood to the brain. Some forms of meditation practiced by Sufis, adherents to the mystical path of Islam, believe the sound of the divine exists in every inhalation and exhalation. In addition, both Judaism and Christianity share cantillation, the ritual recitation of scriptural texts.				

Mindfulness Listening Activity – Mystery Sound Shakers						
Goals	Science connections	Cultural and religious connections				
Use your senses and concentration to identify and match mystery sounds.	We have to pay close attention to hear and feel the small differences in sound between some of the mystery objects. There are strong connections between areas of the brain that we use to process hearing and touch. Both of these senses might have evolved from the skin. There is also evidence of crisscrossing between hearing and touch in brain imaging.	Many religious practices are based on chanting, vocal music, and the spoken word – using sound and vibration. Most religious practices from Sikhism to Islam to Christianity are based around sound. Drumming ceremonies, using deep-toned mantras like "om" during meditation, and the spoken and sung words of prayers are examples. Tones and vibrations can create an immediate shared and communal experience during ceremony. Many worship spaces traditionally were designed to favor either speech or music.				

Mindfulness Noticing Activity – Tessellations and Patterns						
Goals	Science connections	Cultural and religious connections				
Make your own repeating patterns using basic shapes.	Patterns are all around us. Our brains recognize patterns to help us understand the world and communicate. We find repeating patterns pleasing to look at. The visual cortex in our brains uses shape and color to recognize and classify patterns. Scientists have shown through brain imaging that we prefer symmetrical shapes and patterns when compared to asymmetric ones. The field of Neuroesthetics is a recent grouping of scientists interested in how we use our brains to respond to art.	Many religious practices use repeating patterns to show connections to natural or divine ideals. Similar to ancient Greek and Roman civilizations (around 700 BCE to 500 CE), Islamic art (starting around 700 CE) uses repetitive geometric patterns to inspire contemplation of the infinite. The repeating and interlocking patterns can extend endlessly. Divine geometry was often used in places of worship to remind people of God's greatness. The mandala, Sanskrit for "circle," is a symbolic diagram in Hindu and Buddhist traditions representing the universe. Mandalas use geometric patterns arranged around a center point. They can be painted on cloth or paper, or drawn on a carefully prepared ground. Creating a mandala is meant to be meditative and put its creator into contact with his/her inner universe.				



This guide was developed by the <u>Children's Creativity Museum</u> in San Francisco, CA, and was based on the narrative, *Sounding the Sacred in New York City* and source information by TWP Fellow Catherine Fletcher. The guide is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-ShareAlike 3.0. More information and activities can be found on the <u>TWP: Science & Religion</u>, <u>True Stories Well Told website</u>.

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Mindfulness Breathing Activity

MAKE A PINWHEEL

Description

Discover stress-relieving and healthy deep breathing techniques by making and using a pinwheel.

Suitable for family groups with young kids ages 5 and up.

Materials

- One-hole punches and child-safe scissors
- Glue sticks and/or tape dispensers
- Print-out pinwheel template
- Plastic straws cut into 1-2 inch pieces
- Wooden food skewers (pre-cut to remove point)
- Optional: 2 plastic stand-up sign holders

Note: Visitors often like to decorate their pinwheel so consider having some stickers and markers nearby.

Safety

Pre-cut the pointed tips off the wooden skewers with scissors or a wire cutter before you put them out. Also, use child-safe scissors and nontoxic glue sticks.





<u>Make a Pinwheel</u> STEP 1:

Cut out the pinwheel square. Fold paper along the diagonals and use hole punch to cut out a straw-sized hole in the center.

STEP 2:

Use glue stick to add glue to a ring around the hole and cut each fold half-way down to the hole.

STEP 3:

Glue down every other point to the center without covering the hole.

STEP 4:

Insert straw piece through the hole and secure with two pieces of tape so it doesn't move.

STEP 5:

Thread the wooden dowel through the straw. Try blowing on it to test if it spins.

STEP 6:

Practice your breathing. <u>Take a deep breath. Fill your belly</u> <u>first, and then your chest. Breath out long and steady to</u> <u>keep the pinwheel moving</u>. Do it again. How do you feel?

Preparation and Facilitation Tips

Preparation

- To prepare the materials, cut the plastic straws into roughly 1-2 inch-long pieces and cut off the pointed ends from all wooden food skewers.
- Handing out the straw pieces and skewers are a good way to control your supply. Also, think about storing these items in paper cups or another type of container at the activity station to keep them from rolling away.
- The print-out pinwheel template is meant to be two-sided. Make sure to print it on a printer/copier that can print two-sided copies. Hold finished copies up to a light to make sure they are roughly aligned.
- Add the "Science Connections" and "Religious and Cultural Connections" signs, and the activity instructions sheet, to each station.

Facilitation Tips

- Have some pre-built pinwheels on hand to attract visitors to your table.
- Sometimes young kids will need help attaching the pinwheel to the straw piece with tape.
- If pinwheels don't spin at first trying expanding the fins, tilting the whole pinwheel on the straw piece, or change your angle of blowing.
- There are a prompts to encourage visitors to practice deep breathing techniques on the instructions sheet and the pinwheel template. Use these to encourage breathing with the pinwheel.
 - To stay calm and relax take deep breaths.
 - Fill your belly first, and then your chest.
 - Breathe out long and steady to keep the pinwheel moving.
- Challenge visitors to keep the pinwheel spinning longer using the deep breathing techniques.
- Ask visitors how they feel after taking several deep breaths. Is this something they can do to calm down in stressful situations?
- Some visitors will remember times they learned about breathing and/or mediation in school or other settings. Encourage them to share their experiences if they are willing.
- Remind visitors of the science, religion, and cultural connections to the activity through the two signs. More information on mindfulness and activity connections can be found in the *What is Mindfulness Background Information* guide.

MINDFULNESS BREATHING

Discover healthy, stress-relieving deep breathing techniques by making and using a pinwheel.



Science Connections

The breath is the body's natural stress reliever.



When you get upset, your breathing is **short and fast**, which **raises blood pressure** and releases stress hormones.

Breathing slowly relaxes you by stopping stressproducing hormones, and lowering blood pressure.



MINDFULNESS BREATHING

Religion and Cultural Connections



Many religions and cultures use slow breathing to focus.

Pranayama, is a type of breathing-out exercise found in Indo-Tibetan meditation traditions.

Both Judaism and Christianity share **cantillation**, the ritual recitation of scriptural texts, sometimes using breathing techniques within short melodies.

The **Sufis**, who follow a mystical path of Islam, believe divine sounds are in every breath.





Take home breathing tips!

- <u>To stay calm and relax take deep breaths.</u>
- Fill your belly first, and then your chest.
- Breathe out long and steady to keep the pinwheel moving.





This activity was developed by the <u>Children's Creativity</u> <u>Museum</u> in San Francisco, CA, and was inspired by the narrative, *Sounding the Sacred in New York City* by TWP Fellow Catherine Fletcher. The activity materials are licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-ShareAlike 3.0. More information and activities can be found on the <u>TWP: Science & Religion</u>, <u>True Stories Well Told website</u>.

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Activity photograph: Darrell Porcello Illustrations: Jerrold Connors

Mindfulness <u>Listening Activity</u>

MYSTERY SOUND SHAKERS

Description

Use your senses and concentration to identify and match mystery sounds.

Suitable for family groups with young kids age 3 and up.

Materials

- 10 plastic Easter eggs
- 1 empty egg carton
- Print-out "Group #1" and "Group #2" mats
- 5 pairs of objects, one type per egg (some suggestions: rice, beans, paper clips, quarters, tiny bells, buttons, screws, gummy bears, sprinkles)
- Optional: 2 plastic stand-up sign holders

Note: Sometimes it helps to have a third set of the objects taped down on an "answer" sheet to show visitors struggling with guesses.

Safety

Try to avoid foods in the set of objects that may cause allergic reactions like nuts. When revealing the objects with small children, hold the eggs to avoid access to potential choking hazards.





What is in the eggs? STEP 1:

We can't see inside the eggs, so how can we figure out what is inside? What senses can we use?

STEP 2:

Try to find the egg in Group #1 that contains coins. How did you know?

STEP 3:

Now match the egg from Group #2 that contains coins and place them together in the egg carton.

STEP 4:

Go through eggs in Groups #1 and #2 and match pairs of eggs with the same hidden object.

STEP 5:

Check your work. Were you right? What was similar about the objects in the eggs and what was different?

Preparation and Facilitation Tips

Preparation

- Set up your table. Tape down the Group #1 and Group # print-out mats on either side of an empty egg carton.
- Add one type of object in a pair of eggs until you have 5 pairs. Each pair should have an egg in Group #1 and Group #2.
- Try to use different colors between the two groups of eggs for easy resets.
- Don't always use objects with very distinct shaking sounds. Mix it up! It can be fun to use objects with similar sounds to add some challenge.
- Place the "Science Connections" and "Religious and Cultural Connections" signs, and the activity instructions sheet, next to the activity area.
- *Optional*: create an answer key by taping down a third set of the objects to a strip of paper.

Facilitation Tips

- Invite visitors to the table to help you figure out what objects are hidden in the eggs.
- Gently remind visitors they cannot open the eggs to see what's inside. Ask them what senses they might use.
- Ask visitors to pair eggs from Group #1 and Group #2, have them place the two eggs side-by-side in the egg carton.
- Encourage young visitors to speak out loud what they are hearing/feeling when they shake the eggs, and their guesses.
- Give visitors time to concentrate on the sounds and feel the vibrations of each egg. This is a great activity for parents/caregivers and very young kids to work together.
- While revealing the objects in the eggs, ask visitors to restate their guesses.
- If you have an optional answer key, you can use it with visitors struggling to come up with guesses.
- Remind visitors of the science, religion and cultural connections to the activity through the two signs. More information on mindfulness and activity connections can be found in the *What is Mindfulness Background Information* guide.

MINDFULNESS LISTENING



Use your senses and concentration to identify and match mystery sounds.

Science Connections

We have to pay close attention to hear and feel the small differences in sound between some of the mystery objects.





There are strong connections between areas of the brain that we use to process hearing and touch.

Both of these senses might have evolved from the skin. There is also evidence of crisscrossing between hearing and touch in brain imaging.



MINDFULNESS LISTENING

Religion and Cultural Connections



Many religious practices are based on chanting, vocal music, and the spoken word–using sound and vibration.

Drumming ceremonies, using deep-toned mantras like **"om"** during meditation, and the spoken and sung words of prayers are examples.

Many worship spaces traditionally were designed to favor either speech or music.

Tones and vibrations can create a shared experience during ceremony and add to a communal experience.



Group #1



Group #2





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Image Credits

Activity photograph: Darrell Porcello Illustrations: Jerrold Connors

Mindfulness <u>Noticing Activity</u>

TESSELLATIONS AND PATTERNS

Description

Make your own repeating patterns using basic shapes.

Suitable for family groups with young kids ages 5 and up.

Materials

Longer activity format with make-and-take:

- 2-3 pairs of child-safe scissors
- Glue sticks and/or tape dispensers
- Sets of print-out shape sheets on colored paper
- Print-out activity mats
- Optional: 2 plastic stand-up sign holders

Shorter activity format for younger kids:

- Pre-cut shapes on colored cardstock using print-out shape sheets
- Print-out activity mats
- Optional: 2 plastic stand-up sign holders

Note: If younger kids are participating in the longer activity format, it can speed up throughput by pre-cutting the paper shapes.

Safety

Use child-safe scissors and nontoxic glue sticks.





Activity instructions sheet for visitors

Make a repeating pattern

STEP 1:

Chose two shapes, with two <u>different colors</u>. Place them together without overlapping. This is your <u>source</u>

<u>pattern</u>.



*This is just a model. Choose any shape and color you want!

STEP 2:

Add your source pattern to a piece of paper. Try putting it near the center of the paper.

STEP 3:

Now copy your source pattern using the same shapes and colors. Add this second set of shapes to the paper making sure the patterns share one border but to do not overlap.



STEP 4:

Repeat step 3 and cover the paper with your repeating pattern...or **tessellation**.



Preparation and Facilitation Tips

Preparation

Please note there are two version of the activity. **The longer activity format** has visitors cutting out and pasting shapes into a take-home repeating pattern. This will require more materials and stations for longer dwell times. **The shorter activity format** uses pre-cut shapes on cardstock or thick paper that younger kids can rearrange into repeating patterns. These materials can be reused, as visitors will not take them home.

- Make sure there are enough shapes of different colors for visitors to have choices when pairing the two base shapes if their repeating pattern. This could be whole shape sheets or pre-cut shapes depending on the activity format you choose.
- Make a few in-progress repeating patterns to show visitors.
- Add the "Science Connections" and "Religious and Cultural Connections" signs, and the activity instructions sheet, to each station.
- *Optional*: have images of mosaics patterns from around the worlds in printouts or displayed on a large screen, laptop, or tablet to show repeating pattern in churches, mosques, and other structures.

Facilitation Tips

- Invite visitors to the table by asking them if they want to make a pattern similar to your in-progress version.
- Ask visitors to help you identify the component shapes in repeating patterns from your in-progress version, works of art from previous visitors, or images you found on the web.
- Younger kids might need help if they are cutting out and gluing/taping the shapes together in the longer activity format.
- As visitors put together their patterns, ask them how an ordered pattern with shapes makes them feel. Is it pleasing to repeat the pattern across an entire page?
- Remind visitors of the science, religion, and cultural connections to the activity through the two signs. More information on mindfulness and activity connections can be found in the *What is Mindfulness Background Information* guide.

MINDFULNESS NOTICING

Learn how to recognize shapes in repeating geometric patterns and make your own.



Science Connections

Patterns are all around us. Our brains recognize patterns to help us understand the world and communicate.





Brain imaging shows shapes and patterns are pleasing to us.

The visual cortex in our brains uses shape and color to recognize and classify patterns.



Many religious practices use repeating patterns to show connections to natural or divine ideals.

Islamic art uses repetitive geometric patterns to inspire contemplation of the infinite. The repeating and interlocking patterns can extend endlessly.

The mandala, Sanskrit for "circle," is a symbolic diagram in Hindu and Buddhist traditions representing the universe. Mandalas use geometric patterns and making them is meant to be meditative.















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Image Credits

Tessellation shapes based on <u>original designs</u> from Dr. Margo Lynn Mankus Activity photograph: Darrell Porcello Illustrations: Jerrold Connors Mindfulness <u>Reflection Activity</u>

MANDALA MAKING



Description

Use these materials to invite visitors to share their thoughts about mindfulness in a collaborative mandala-building exercise.

Suitable for family groups with young kids age 5 and up.

Materials

- Petal shapes from attached template
- Child-safe scissors
- Pens, pencils, or markers
- Tape or glue
- Large sheet of paper
- Optional: stickers and other decorations

Note: If you are expecting a large group, you could pre-cut the petalshapes for faster throughput.

Safety

Use child-safe scissors and nontoxic glue sticks.

Preparation and Facilitation Tips

Preparation

- Attach your large sheet of paper to a table or wall. Place it a level kids can reach. Using a large sheet of paper will help with cleanup and preservation of the mandala.
- The sheet of paper should be big enough to accommodate a growing mandala. Depending on how many people you expect at your workshop, think about starting with 3ft by 3ft square. You can always extend by attaching sheets of normal copy paper.
- Print out sufficient copies of the petal-shape template. Using different colored paper can help make the activity and resulting mandala more attractive to families.
- Have enough writing implements and glue or tape on hand for visitors.
- Print out and place the activity signs near the mandala area.
- It sometimes helps to start the mandala with a few petals as examples. Staff and volunteers at the workshop can fill some out and add them first.

Facilitation Tips

- This reflection activity is a relaxing way for families to think back on their experiences and finish their time at the workshop. No specific facilitation is required.
- While it is interesting to see how the mandala grows on its own, sometimes visitors like to see a visual cue to direct them. A simple diagram like the one below can be attached to the large sheet of paper if required.
- Families can write stories, draw, or just use simple smiley faces to express themselves. All contributions should be encouraged.





What is mindfulness?

The key word to understanding mindfulness is **awareness**. Being mindful is being aware and noticing your **thoughts**, **senses**, and **feelings** and anything happening **right now** around you.

Now tell us your story about mindfulness!

Fill out one of the petals to make a mandala with us!

How does this topic make you feel? Does it bring a story to mind? Draw or write your thoughts on this side



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Image Credits Illustrations: Jerrold Connors Mindfulness Workshop

EVENT SIGN AND NAMETAGS



Mindfulness workshop event sign

Use this sign to advertise your workshop's time and place.

Mindfulness workshop event nametags

Use these fun nametag templates for volunteers or staff.

Mindfulness workshop event sign



Workshop location:_

Date and time:





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STORIES OF SCIENCE & RELIGION

We asked: Can we bring new, compelling, and true stories about harmonies between science and religion into public discourse?

MINDFULNESS WORKSHOP: CHILDREN'S CREATIVITY MUSEUM

This program was an interactive workshop for children and caregivers. Families explored mindfulness through hands-on activities that took a multi-sensory approach to becoming self-aware. Each activity also explored the connection of mindfulness to neuroscience and religion practice, and built a bridge between these ways of thinking. This event was inspired by the narrative, Sounding the Sacred in New York City by Think Write Publish Fellow Catherine Fletcher.

"[I] Immediately thought of our climate in our society today and had [a] preconceived notion that religion/science could never be entwined but after think[ing] a bit about it, makes valid sense that they do [are]." - Event Attendee

PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Below we illustrate average agreement from attendees (n=17) on statements about conversations about science and religion. Most participants agreed that these conversations are **relevant**.



participants' written responses. The word cloud illustrates the themes that emerged from those responses. The **size** of the word is related to the **frequency** of the theme.

We thematically analyzed



93%



Consortium for Science, Policy & Outcomes at Arizona State University CREATIVE NONFICTIO

True stories, well told

79%



supportive thoughtful reflection OSITIVE









Consortium for Science, Policy & Outcomes at Arizona State University JOHN TEMPLETON

