The possible learning benefits of short mind-calming exercises in large classes

Paul Grogan
Dept. of Biology
Midway survey Q3 – This practice should be stopped immediately

- Strongly agree: 38
- Agree: 70
- Neutral: 9
- Disagree: 7
- Strongly disagree: 38

% of respondents (38/70)
2 - Exercise is enjoyable and relaxing*

3 - Exercises are useful to some students, but are not course-related material and therefore are inappropriate within class time
4 – A valuable use of lecture time because I feel it enhances deep learning*

5 – Look forward to each session*
6 – There were times during our lectures when I noticed myself drifting away into distractions, and was able to refocus using this mind-calming approach.

8 – This exercise has introduced me to a valuable perspective that is useful outside the course in learning how to achieve calm/balance in my life.
Some survey comments:

“Overall I am very happy with the mind-calming exercises in which we participated. During the activity, I often found myself getting distracted away from the exercise, but I still feel that the net gain was positive. I actually missed our exercises during guest lectures, as it felt that something was "missing" from the learning experience.”

“At first I thought the exercise was silly. Like I was above it. But towards the middle to end of term, I got really busy and my mind was consumed with all I had to do. When I decided to engage with the exercise I noticed that I was more relaxed and better able to focus on material and be present during the lecture.”

References/Acknowledgements:
Jill Grose and Paula Gardner, Brock University
Barbezat and Bush (2014) Contemplative Practices in Higher Education