

Self-Care Cookbook

Reflections, Recipes, and Resources for Teachers

by Paul K. Fox, PMEA Council for Teacher Training, Recruitment & Retention


January 30, 2026 — DCMEA Winter Conference — Columbia Heights Education Campus

paulkfox.usc@gmail.com <https://paulfox.blog/> © 2021, 2022, 2023, 2025, 2026 Paul K. Fox


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Targets



- ✓ Health & Wellness
- ✓ Stress & Burnout
- ✓ Time Management
- ✓ Self-Care Plan



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What's on the Menu?





- **Cook up** things needed to make informed decisions to promote improvements in your own lifelong health, resilience, and wellbeing, and to remediate stress and
- **NO cookie-cutter**, one-size-fits-all solutions from Chef Fox
- Avoidance of ruined meals, **boil overs** and other kitchen mishaps.
- **Gourmet meals** showcasing fitness and life balance
- Taking inventory of your **pantry cupboard** to review the necessary ingredients to a healthier lifestyle
- Taste of unique/new flavors sampling small **bite-size pieces** for your personal wellness




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The BIG Ideas:



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Time + Priorities

The solution is NOT to manage your time better or work more efficiently. Or at least – that's not the place to start when you're overwhelmed.


The most important step is getting clarity: figuring out what matters most so you can do fewer things better.

— Angela Watson

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Self-Care



You must take care of yourself first. This is the hardest lesson of all, yet it is so important. Chances are you got where you are because you ran yourself ragged taking care of other people's needs. I bet you never said no to requests to be on one more committee, drive carpool, watch a friend's kids, and every other favor someone made of you, yet I'd also bet there's a good chance you never take the time to take care of your own needs. When was the last time you read a book for fun? Or went to a movie you wanted to see? Or pursued a creative endeavor that made you happy? Or any one of a million things you want to do? I bet it's been a long time. — Lesley Moffat

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Ask yourself...



Reviewing the situation

- ✓ How do I usually feel daily throughout the school year?
- ✓ What are the emotional and physical tolls of my job?
- ✓ What specific self-care activities do I need to incorporate to recharge and prevent burnout?
- ✓ What boundaries do I need to set around my work to honor personal time?
- ✓ What support systems can I build and/or professional help should I seek to create a sustainable practice?
- ✓ Reference slide # on prescription slip or go to <https://paulfox.blog/care/>

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Challenges to Wellness



Stress = Physical, mental, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension.



Burnout = Exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment, and depersonalization.

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351171200/figure/fig/111712002/111712002.png>

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Challenges to Wellness

Brownout:
 "A practitioner essentially gives up or performs in a perfunctory manner when confronted with too much stress and too little gratification." [Guy L. & Norcross, L. \(2007\). Leaving it at the office: a guide to psychotherapist self-care. New York, NY: Guilford Publications.](#)

Burnout:
 "A syndrome of physical exhaustion including a negative self-concept, negative job attitude, and loss of concern and feelings." [Keidel, G. \(2002\). Burnout and compassion fatigue among hospice caregivers. American Journal of Hospice and Palliative Care, 19\(3\), 200-205.](#)

— [Recognizing the Need: Self-Care for Music Educators](#)
 by [Grenory S. Perkins, MT-BC](#) and [Angela M. Guerriero, PhD, MT-BC](#)

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351171200/figure/fig/111712002/111712002.png>

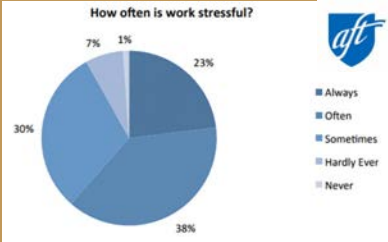
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Stressed-Out Teachers?

- ✓ 61% of educators say their work is always or often stressful
- ✓ 50% say they don't have the same enthusiasm as when they started teaching.

<https://www.thegradenetwork.com/blog/all/2018/01/teachers-and-what-the-epidemic-of-teacher-stress>




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Even Worse Since the Pandemic?



June 2020 Statistics (few surprises here)
The majority of teachers reported that they feel "somewhat" or "extremely"

- **Uncertain 81%** **Sad 60%**
- **Stressed 77%** **Lonely 54%**
- **Anxious 75%**
- **Overwhelmed 74%**

"Educators Feeling Stressed, Anxious, Overwhelmed and Capable" by Dian Schaffhauser
<https://www.adoptaclassroom.org/2022/04/12/state-of-teaching-statistics-2022/>

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Even Worse Since the Pandemic?

"On the other hand, [teachers] also are feeling capable (77 percent), motivated (66 percent) and confident (61 percent). Overall, however, they have greater confidence in their own abilities to adjust to virtual instruction than they do in their students' abilities to do so (81 percent compared to 57 percent)."

— Dian Schaffhauser

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The Status of Teaching

How teaching has changed during the 2021-2022 school year:

- 81% – The overall workload has increased.
- 80% – Spending more time addressing students' mental health.
- 71% – Spending more of their own money on classroom materials.
- 69% – Getting students back on track from learning loss.
- 58% – Increase in classroom interruptions during instruction.
- 55% – Less planning time due to staff shortages and other factors.
- 45% – Had to change their curriculum.
- 35% – Received a smaller budget for school supplies.
- 30% – School or districts' priorities changed.
- 25% – Changes to assignments or their classroom.
- 18% – Had less access to instructional tools and materials.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, constant changes have impacted the teaching profession. In March 2022, two years into the pandemic, AdoptAClassroom.org surveyed 4,665 PreK-12 teachers at public, private, and charter schools nationwide to gather teaching statistics to better understand the current state of teaching. Eighty-five percent of the teachers who responded described their school as high-needs, where 50% or more of students receive free or reduced lunch.

<https://www.adoptaclassroom.org/2022/04/12/state-of-teaching-statistics-2022/>

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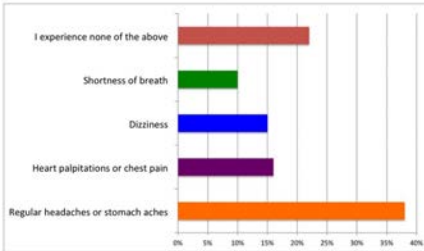
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Stress-Related Symptoms?

"This is a worrying sign that pressure and workload of many teaching jobs is having a very real physical impact on many teachers."

"7 Conclusions from the World's Largest Teacher Burnout Survey" by James Anthony
<https://hotwallingforsuperman.org/teacher-burnout-statistics/>




Over 75% of teachers who responded to the survey complained of the health problems above, which are often associated with a failure to deal with stress.

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Sound familiar?




- ✓ Overwhelming workload, long hours, and challenging classroom situations
- ✓ Inconsistent hydration and consumption of a balanced diet
- ✓ Irregular amounts of daily aerobic physical exercise
- ✓ Insufficient quantities (length, depth, and frequency) of rest and sleep

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Sound familiar?




- ✓ Infrequent use of sick days or vacations as needed for restorative health
- ✓ Misuse of the voice at work
- ✓ Inadequate hearing conservation and protection from over-exposure to sound

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Sound familiar?



- ✓ Deficient scheduling of opportunities for mindfulness, meditation, and/or reflection
- ✓ Deprivation of personal outlets for creative self-expression (not related to job)
- ✓ Lack of time to explore hobbies, interests, and socialization with family, friends, and loved ones

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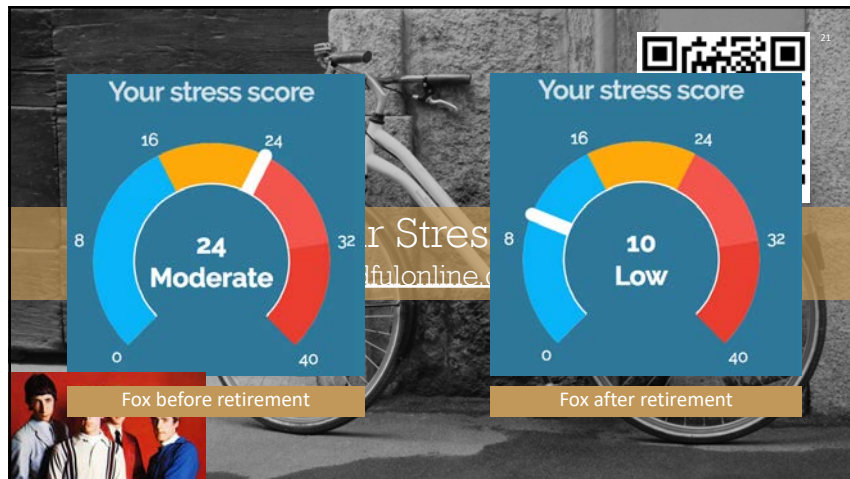


Test Your Stress Levels:

<https://www.bemindfulonline.com/test-your-stress/>



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What Is a Teacher?

- ✓ Focused, self-disciplined
- ✓ Great work ethic
- ✓ Self-motivated
- ✓ Fiduciary
- ✓ Model exemplar
- ✓ Professional 24/7

Teaching is the one of the largest professions in the world...
3.7 million teachers in U.S. alone
<https://datafountain.org/2012/economics/teachers>

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Are We Just Tired?

- ✓ "I feel like work never ends."
- ✓ "I'm exhausted, and every weekend, I spend at least one day in my pajamas."
- ✓ "I love my students, and I have a really good class this year, but I'm done and ready for a break."
- ✓ I was so tired that I ended up missing out on... [anything personal like] family dinner."

— Paul Murphy

Why Teachers Are So Tired and What They Can Do About It
Paul Murphy

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How Many Decisions?


- ✓ Sleeping-in an extra 10-15 minutes
- ✓ Watching morning news on TV instead of finishing your lesson plans
- ✓ Stopping by Dunkin Donuts on the way
- ✓ Chatting with colleagues in the teacher's room vs. getting work done on the photocopier
- ✓ Logging into personal email or Facebook instead of doing grades, etc.

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How Many Decisions?



- ✓ Sleeping-in and not going to work
- ✓ Watching me finish your work
- ✓ Stopping by the principal's office
- ✓ Chatting with a friend in the room vs. getting work done
- ✓ Logging into personal email or Facebook instead of doing grades, etc.

"Teachers use a lot of willpower... often exercise some form of self-control 14 or more times before students ever enter their class."
— Paul Murphy

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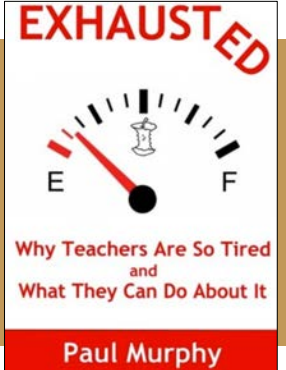
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Science of Exhaustion

- ✓ Baumeister study: the link between self-control and fatigue

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibui4M4eic&t=396s>



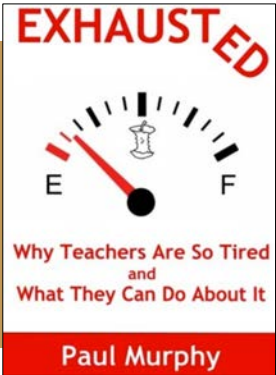
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Science of Exhaustion

- ✓ Baumeister study: the link between self-control and fatigue
- ✓ Willpower "wears out" like a muscle?
- ✓ The physical consequences of ego depletion & delayed gratification
- ✓ The effects of self-regulation on blood glucose (& why time of the day is key!)



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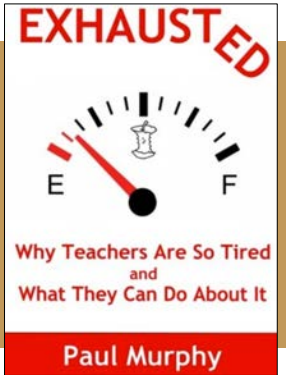
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Science of Exhaustion

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"Diminished willpower means lowered blood sugar, which means physical fatigue, reduced impulse control, bingeing behavior, and other poor decision-making."




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Over Strict Regimen?




6:30 a.m. an hour of cardio
7:30 a.m. one hour of lower-body weight training
8:30 a.m. high protein/low-fat breakfast
9:00 a.m. two hours on the driving range
11:00 a.m. practicing putting
11:30 a.m. playing nine holes
2:00 p.m. healthy lunch
2:30 p.m. two to four more hours on the golf course
6:00 p.m. back in the gym working on upper-body
7:00 p.m. dinner and relaxation.

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Over Strict Regimen?



- ✓ Extra-marital affairs
- ✓ Personal calls to escort services
- ✓ Wife, discovering his "extra-curricular" activities, assaulting him
- ✓ DUI arrest
- ✓ Divorce
- ✓ Destruction of his reputation
- ✓ Injuries
- ✓ Poor golf play

"...His remarkable self-discipline left him depleted to the point that he was unable to fight off his most destructive urges at the close of his ego-depleting days!" — Paul Murphy

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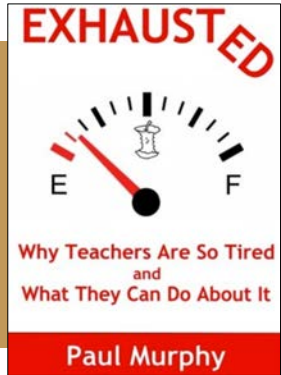
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Remedies

- ✓ Work less/fewer hours
- ✓ Time before school is worth more than twice as much as time after school
- ✓ Use class time to check student work
- ✓ Leverage technology
- ✓ Don't grade everything
- ✓ Stop assigning things

— Paul Murphy



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Stress Reduction

<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/blog-posts/strategy/25-ways-to-reduce-teacher-stress/>

- Close the door during prep time.
- Make a **SHORT** and **DOABLE** "Must Do" and "May Do" lists.
- Delegate items to parent volunteers.
- Lay out your outfit and prep your healthy lunch the night before.
- Get a full eight hours of sleep.



- Work out!
- Get up early!
- Don't take things home.
- Don't overcommit yourself.
- Don't correct every piece of paper.
- Spend time with your family/friends.
- Learn something new.
- Take ten minutes a day and meditate.
- Stay away from negativity.
- Plan a trip.

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De-Stress Strategies

1. Embrace the stress
2. Be imperfect
3. Practice emotional first aid
4. Be grateful
5. Limit "grass is greener" thinking
6. Work smarter, not harder
7. Ask for help
8. Make a connection
9. Breathe (properly)

— Chris Mumford <https://www.wvu.edu/heyteach/article/9-stress-management-strategies-every-teacher-needs-know1612.html>

Hey Teach!
The resources to thrive—and the laughs to survive—as an educator.

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Breathe like the Navy SEALs


TACTICAL BREATHING (alleviate fight/flight tension)

1. Place right hand on your belly, pushing out with a big exhale.
2. Breathe in through your nostrils, slowly drawing the breath upward from your belly to your upper chest.
3. Pause and exhale, starting from your chest and moving downward to the air in your belly. Imagine your belly button touching your spine.
4. Once you're comfortable with a full, deep breath, repeat it, this time making the exhale twice as long as the length of the inhale. For example, inhale to the count of four, pause briefly, and exhale to the count of eight.
5. Repeat three times.

BOXED BREATHING (helps to ground you, sharpen your concentration, become more alert and calmer)

1. Expel all of the air from your lungs.
2. Keep them empty for four seconds.
3. Inhale through your nose to a count of four.
4. Hold for a four count.
5. Exhale for a four count.
6. Repeat: 10-20 minutes.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/normanazish/2019/05/30/how-to-de-stress-in-5-minutes-or-less-according-to-a-navy-seal/>



— Norma Nazish

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Coping & Learning "Acceptance"

Name _____
This _____
Tune... _____

God grant me the serenity...
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can, and
the wisdom to know the difference."



"I think I was getting, like, a little bit over the top with [the party fashion] – getting pretty tired and pretty wasted. And I went to bed one night and had a kind of restless night. But I had a dream where my mother, who had been dead at that point for about 10 years, came to me in the dream and it was as if she could see that I was troubled. And she sort of said to me, she said, 'Let it be.' And I remember quite clearly her saying, 'Let it be,' and 'It's going to be OK. Don't worry.' You know, 'Let it be.' I woke up and I remembered the dream, and I thought, 'Well, that's a great idea.' And I then sat down and wrote the song using the feeling from that dream and of my mum coming to me in the dream. Sir James Paul McCartney

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Coping & Learning "Acceptance"

It's Not Your Sandbox!


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Signs of Burnout




Physical

Tired, lowered immunity, illnesses, aches & pains, loss of appetite or sleep.



Emotional

Sense of self-doubt, failure, helplessness, loneliness, cynicism, loss of satisfaction/motivation.



Behavioral

Withdrawal, isolation, skipping work, procrastination, frustration, overuse of food, drugs, alcohol.


<https://www.healthline.com/health/burnout-prevention-and-recovery>

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Burnout Symptoms



- ✓ Disillusionment over the job
- ✓ Cynicism at work
- ✓ Impatience with co-workers, administrators, and students
- ✓ Lack of satisfaction in accomplishments


— Mayo Clinic

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Burnout Symptoms



- ✓ Dragging themselves to work and trouble getting started once they're there
- ✓ Lack of energy
- ✓ Unexplained aches/pains
- ✓ Self-medicating with food, drugs, or alcohol
- ✓ Changes in sleep/eating patterns


— Mayo Clinic

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Recognize These?



- **Exhaustion.** This is a fatigue so deep that there's no way to "turn it off," no matter how badly you want to. It's deep in your bones. The kind of tired where you just want to ooze into your bed and disconnect from life.
- **Extreme graveness.** Realizing you go hours without smiling or laughing, or days without a belly laugh.
- **Anxiety.** The constant, nagging feeling that you can and should do more, while simultaneously realizing you need to unplug and spend more time with your family. But there are so many things to do.
- **Being overwhelmed.** Questioning how they can possibly add one more task, expectation, or mandate to your plate. Compromising your values of excellence just so you can check-off 15 more boxes to stay in compliance. All the while knowing it still won't be enough.
- **Seeking.** Losing your creativity, imagination, patience, and enthusiasm for daily challenges. Craving reflection time and productive collaboration rather than group complaining.
- **Isolation.** Wanting to head for the deepest, darkest cave where no one will see your vulnerability. A place where your limits are unseen and unquestioned and all is quiet.

<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/2014/05/20/10-pillars-signs-of-solutions-for-burnout.html>

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Causes of Burnout

- ✓ Lack of autonomy
- ✓ Dysfunctional work environment
- ✓ Inadequate social support
- ✓ Extremes of activity
- ✓ Poor work/life balance

— Paul Murphy




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Burnout = Demoralization



— "The Problem with Stories About Teacher Burnout" by Doris Santoro in *Kappan* December 2019/January 2020


- ✓ Teachers feel frustrated from accomplishing good work that benefits students, communities, and the profession.
- ✓ Problem is external and does not indicate a "weakness" or lie within the individual teachers themselves.
- ✓ Dissatisfaction in education is due to moral and ethical conflicts.

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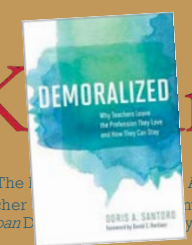
"The proposed remedies for burnout (self-care, boundaries, resilience) are unlikely to alleviate the pain of demoralization."

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"Only by addressing the moral sources of teacher's anguish might we stem the tide of teacher exodus."

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More Links on Burnout

- <https://naime.org/teacherburnout-its-real-signs-and-how-to-avoid-it/>
- <https://www.esatonline.com/blog/avoiding-teacher-burnout-managing-it-here/>
- <https://www.edweek.org/article/2014/05/05/online-signs-of-solutions-for-burnout.html>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2014/12/12/teacher-the-day-i-knew-i-was-burned-out/2014-12-12/>

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Definition of Self-Care



What it is...

Something we do deliberately for our mental, emotional and physical health.



What it isn't...

Not something we force ourselves to do or something we don't enjoy doing.

<https://psychcentral.com/blog/what-self-care-is-and-what-it-isnt-2/>

Self-Care Cookbook for DCMEA Winter Conference on January 30, 2026, and PMEA Annual Conference on April 23, 2026. <https://paulfox/care.blog/>

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Self-Care




- ✓ Key to living a balanced life
- ✓ It's something you actively plan, not allow to just happen!
- ✓ Be aware of what you do, why you do it, how it feels, and what the outcomes are.

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<https://psychcentral.com/blog/what-self-care-is-and-what-it-isnt-2/>

Tips on Self-Care

- ✓ Create a NO list.
- ✓ Promote a nutritious, healthy diet.
- ✓ Get enough sleep.
- ✓ Exercise.
- ✓ Follow-up with medical care.
- ✓ Use relaxation exercises and/or practice meditation.



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<https://www.psychcentral.com/blog/what-are-self-care-tips-and-why-they-matter/>

Tips on Self-Care

- ✓ Spend enough time with loved ones.
- ✓ Do at least one relaxing activity every day, whether it's taking a walk or spending 30 minutes unwinding.
- ✓ Do at least one pleasurable activity every day, from going to the cinema, cooking, or meeting with friends.
- ✓ Find opportunities to laugh.

PsychCentral®



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I LOVE MY JOB BUT IT'S KILLING ME


The TEACHER'S GUIDE to Conquering CHRONIC STRESS and SICKNESS

LESLEY MOFFAT

August 2016

Before...

- ✓ ADHD Symptoms
- ✓ Allergies
- ✓ Arthritis
- ✓ Asthma
- ✓ Acid Reflux and Indigestion
- ✓ Back Pain and Surgery
- ✓ Chronic Exhaustion
- ✓ Depression
- ✓ Migraines
- ✓ Overweight
- ✓ Sleep Disorders
- ✓ Wanted to Leave Teaching



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Before and After

August 2016

January 2019

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Mpower Method

- Meals
- Movement
- Music
- Mindfulness



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I LOVE MY JOB BUT IT'S KILLING ME

The **TEACHER'S GUIDE** to Conquering **CHRONIC STRESS** and **SICKNESS**

LESLEY MOFFAT

DP

Mojo Meter

1. I have a lot of aches and pains.	T F
2. I often feel tired after eating.	T F
3. My memory doesn't seem to be as sharp as it used to be.	T F
4. Other people have mentioned that I seem down, upset, or not myself.	T F
5. I experience a lot of brain fog.	T F
6. I don't have enough energy to get me through my days without it being a struggle.	T F
7. I experience digestive issues several times a week.	T F
8. I feel tired a lot of the time.	T F
9. I get a lot of illnesses, like colds, sinus infections, and other common and contagious ailments.	T F
10. I don't have any energy in reserve.	T F
11. My weight is higher than what feels good.	T F
12. I experience frequent bloating.	T F
13. Sometimes I feel like all I want to do is cry and escape the exhaustion.	T F
14. I am at a weight that doesn't feel good.	T F
15. I don't have a regular (4+ times per week) exercise routine.	T F
16. My desk / workspace feels cluttered.	T F
17. My house feels cluttered.	T F
18. My closets are disorganized.	T F
19. Even though I like my job, I often dread going to work.	T F
20. My car is messy.	T F
21. I feel like there's never enough time to get things done.	T F

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STATEMENT	GRAINS OR AT LEAST GLUTEN	CARBS naturally found in foods	DAIRY	MEAT	SUGAR Added sugars & sweeteners
I have a lot of aches and pains.					
I often feel tired after eating.					
My memory doesn't seem to be as sharp as it used to be.					
Other people have mentioned that I seem down or upset or not myself.					
I experience a lot of brain fog.					
I don't have enough energy to get me through my days without it being a struggle.					
I experience digestive issues several times a week.					
I feel tired a lot of the time.					
I get a lot of illnesses, like colds, sinus infections, and other common and contagious ailments.					
I don't have any energy in reserve.					
My weight is higher than what feels good.					
I experience frequent bloating.					
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STATEMENT	GRAINS OR AT LEAST GLUTEN	CARBS naturally found in foods	DAIRY	MEAT	SUGAR Added sugars & sweeteners
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I don't have any energy in reserve.					
My weight is higher than what feels good.					
I experience frequent bloating.					
Sometimes I feel like all I want to do is cry and escape the exhaustion.					

Brain Fog — it's a real thing

According to Thomas Oppong, get rid of most...

Clutter

Feeding comfort

Sitting still

Distractions

Consuming media

Multi-tasking

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Changing Habits...

- ✓ Take a break from social media.
- ✓ Seek out ways to compliment others.
- ✓ Allow someone to go ahead of you in line at the store.
- ✓ Set your alarm for nine minutes earlier and use those nine minutes to listen to an inspiring song.

— Lesley Moffat

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<https://paulfox/care.blog/>

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Changing Habits...

- ✓ Turn off notifications on your phone.
- ✓ Take a "stay-cation" by spending the night in another room of your house.
- ✓ Change your alarm sound to something soothing.
- ✓ Avoid electronic devices for the first hour of your day.

— Lesley Moffat



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<https://www.shetteacher.com/4-simple-steps-to-being-a-happier-and-healthier-music-teacher/>

Traffic bump deep breathing

Coda: Summary of Advice for Better Self-Care (Chapter 10)

1. Take deep breaths when you encounter speed bumps and stop signs during your daily commute.
2. Write a cover page to your syllabus outlining appropriate times and methods for parents and students to contact you.
3. Have a work space that is exclusively yours, including a "do not disturb" sign, closed door, and/or noise-cancelling headphones.
4. Talk to your boss about reasonable expectations, including how many after-school and evening events are anticipated.
5. Enlist the help of others (volunteers, boosters, etc.).
6. Start your mornings in a way that charges you up for the day.
7. Re-evaluate your work space and make changes changes that will be conducive for more efficiency.
8. Plan meals and make time to eat them.
9. Stay hydrated.
10. Incorporate time to upgrade yourself.
11. Ask yourself, "Does this choice align with who I am?"
12. Come up with a self-care plan that is sustainable.

Maintain office hours


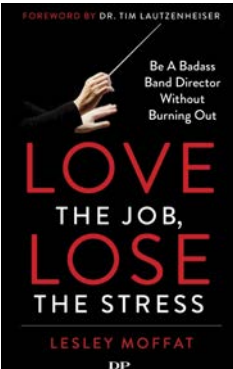
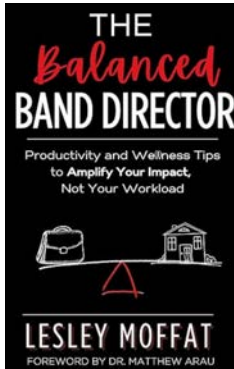
"Do Not Disturb" sign




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More publications from Lesley Moffat... <https://mpowerededucator.com/>

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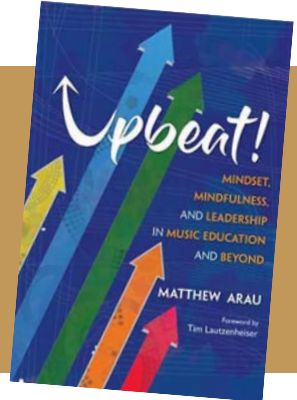
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"Upbeat"

Divided into three parts — Ignite, Inspire, & Lead — Upbeat! takes readers on a journey from internal self-reflection to outward expressions of leadership, with chapters addressing such topics as:

- Self-care for optimal mental, emotional, & physical wellness
- The transformative power of positivity and gratitude
- Growth mindset
- Mindful breathing and listening in an ensemble setting
- Fostering a culture of excellence and connection
- Creating vision and mission statements for your organization
- The essential qualities of an effective leader
- How to develop a thriving student leadership program

— Matthew Arau



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"Upbeat"






— Matthew Arau

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MEJ Self-Care Plan



- ✓ "Health and Wellness for In-Service and Future Music Teachers" by Christa Kuebel *Music Educators Journal*, June 2019
- ✓ Is it stress or more than stress?
- ✓ Implementing a realistic and effective teacher self-care plan
- ✓ Investing in yourself



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It's All About Goals



- ✓ Focus on 1-3 area(s) of self-care that reflect(s) your greatest needs: physical, mental, emotional, social, academic/professional, or spiritual.
- ✓ Write one self-care goal for this week. Remember to be S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound).
- ✓ Schedule your self-care goal.



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Suggestions for Self-Care

Figure adapted from Laurie Pearlman and Karen Saakvitne, *Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization* (New York: Norton, 1996) and "Developing a Self-Care Plan," ReachOut Schools, accessed April 18, 2018. <https://schools.au.reachout.com/articles/developing-a-self-care-plan>

Physical	Emotional	Mental	Professional	Social	Spiritual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercise regularly. Practice healthful sleep habits. Eat nutritious foods. Eat regularly. Limit or reduce the use of stimulants such as caffeine. Take time off when sick. Stay hydrated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use positive self-talk. Practice mindfulness. Try meditation or relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, or guided imagery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disconnect from social media, computer, and TV. Write in a journal. Read something unrelated to school/work. Create something new. Visit a professional counselor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find balance in activities through time management strategies. Avoid procrastination. Set realistic goals. Work in a place that is conducive to productivity. Take a break during the workday to eat lunch or take a quick walk. Consider your workload before accepting new responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek the support of friends, family, or on-campus resources. Set boundaries and cut back when needed. Join organizations that interest you. Schedule dates with friends and partners. Make time to communicate with friends and family far away. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a gratitude list. Pray or go to a service. Make time for reflection. Identify what is meaningful and its place in your life.



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Self-Care Tips for Teachers

1. Create a relaxing classroom ambiance
2. Set boundaries to protect your peace
3. Prioritize your mental health by connecting with a therapist
4. Practice mindful breathing during breaks
5. Keep a reflective journal
6. Connect with other teachers
7. Integrate movement into your day
8. Prepare healthy, energizing snacks
9. Engage in professional development that engages you
10. Create a calm morning routine
11. Unplug after school and leave work at work


Talkspace
<https://www.talkspace.com/2-10x-self-care-for-teachers/>

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The 3 R's of Teacher Self-Care



Reflect


"Self-reflection is necessary to fostering emotional wellness as it allows us to avoid unhealthy patterns and live a fulfilling and authentic life."

by Dr. Charmain Jackman



Release

A ritual to "let go of unfinished business, grief, and other regrets" you may inevitably have at the end of your school year.



Recharge

"...prioritizing themselves approaching self-care in small, bite-sized activities and creating visual cues for change."

<https://www.pbs.org/education/blogs/voices-in-education/the-3-rs-for-teacher-self-care-reflect-release-recharge/>

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Especially for Music Teachers

- Hearing Protection
- Movement Prep for Marching Bands
- Musician Wellness Tips
- Vocal Health
- Other NAFME self-care articles




<https://www.jwpepper.com/wellness>

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Aligning Priorities



1. Identify your **non-flexibles**
2. List your **top priorities** that you want to uncover more time for
3. Specify what life would look like if you prioritized these things
4. Add top priorities to the unallocated time in your schedule
5. Identify/schedule the **in-betweens**

— Angela Watson
<https://paulfox/care.blog/>

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Strategies for Immediate Use in Combatting Stress and Burnout
by Nicole Stachelski

- ✓ **Laugh with your students.** Let yourself take time to connect with students and laugh with them. Sometimes we're too serious.
- ✓ **Eat your lunch.** It is easy to work through lunch. Stop. Take that time and eat a balanced lunch to fuel yourself. Give your voice a break. Take a ten-minute quiet time in your car. Or, if you prefer lunch to be social time, spend time with people who bring you up. Sometimes I talk to my mom or call my best friend when I need a positive voice.
- ✓ **Schedule regular activity.** Rather than being just one more thing to do, physical activity can help you be more productive by clearing your mind and elevating your mood.
- ✓ **Drink your water, and use the darn bathroom!** People really need to hear this sometimes. Your needs matter.
- ✓ **Prioritize, and then leave it.** The rest of the work will still be waiting for you tomorrow. You will always find more to do—prioritize to meet deadlines, and set boundaries on the rest.
- ✓ **Keep a consistent bedtime.** If you can stick to a reasonable bedtime, life will feel so much better the next day.
- ✓ **Delegate: Don't be afraid to ask for help.** Have a parent who LOVES to make programs? Have a student that LOVES to organize? There are always people who will love to help. Releasing the need to control is part of the longer trek into vulnerability—but delegating concrete tasks is a great first step.
- ✓ **Focus on what's really important.** The clock is ticking. I need to get this and this and this done. Time pressure can make teachers numb their own emotions or can impact their interactions with students—making them more impatient and less compassionate. Every time you recognize this happening, refocus toward joy, humor, and connection. Remember what you love about music, and share that passion.

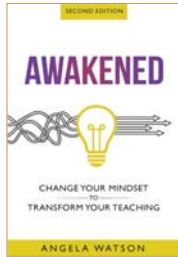
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0027432119873701>

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More on
“Cognitive Distortions”



Similar to MEJ article:

- Over-generalizing (too little evidence)
- Assuming Permanence (problems will exist forever)
- Catastrophizing (magnifying negatives)
- False helplessness
- Polarized thinking

“Much of the time when we think we are being realistic, we are actually operating from a very distinctive **cognitive bias**.”

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More Recipes for
“De-Stressing” All Teachers

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Does this desk
look familiar?

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“Time Management on the Rocks”



Habit 1: Be Proactive® Focus and control what you can control and influence instead of what you can't.	Habit 2: Begin With the End in Mind® Define clear measures of success and a plan to achieve them.
Habit 3: Put First Things First® Prioritize and achieve your most important goals instead of constantly reacting to urgencies.	Habit 4: Think Win-Win® Collaborate more effectively by building high-trust relationships.
Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood® Influence others by developing a clear understanding of their needs and perspectives.	Habit 6: Synergize® Develop innovative solutions that leverage differences and talents of key stakeholders.
Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw® Increase motivation, energy, and overall balance by making time for renewing activities.	

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“Time Management on the Rocks”



Shifting Your Paradigm...

<https://youtu.be/zV3qMTOEWi8>

The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities.

To learn more about Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, visit: <https://www.frankincovey.com/the-7-habits/>

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“The Big Picture”

Habit #3: First Things First

<https://www.franklincovey.com/the-7-habits/habit-3.html>

"Putting first things first means organizing and executing around your most important priorities. It is living and being driven by the principles you value most, not by the agendas and forces surrounding you."


— Stephen Covey



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Priority Management



All about TIME... and the Four D's

- ✓ Do It!
- ✓ Delegate It!
- ✓ Date It!
- ✓ Dump It!

<http://www.prioritymanagement.com/>
<https://blog.hubspot.com/ai/4-ds-of-productivity>

The Four D's of Productivity	
Do. If a task arrives on your plate and is both important and can only be done by you, deal with it immediately.	Delegate. In the event a task pops up that can be or should be dealt with by one of your team members or colleagues, delegate it.
Delete. Delete any and all tasks you deem unimportant.	Delay. If you're unable to do one of the first three suggestions, set a reminder for yourself to revisit the task at a later time.

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Priority Management

PM's "WorkingSmart method" promises to help you "gain control over your day, find balance, prioritize your work, and reach your goals," giving you time to focus on the tasks that are important to you. The bottom line – every digital or printed post-it-note, piece of mail, receipt, publication, email or other communication – must be "put in its place" on the spot – either completed instantly, deferred to another time, given to someone else to do, or THROWN OUT!

All about TIME... and the Four D's

- ✓ Do It!
- ✓ Delegate It!
- ✓ Date It!
- ✓ Dump It!

<http://www.prioritymanagement.com/>
<https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/4-14-16-of-productivity>

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Priority Management

Consider These PM "Hacks"

1. In advance, set-up file folders labeled by months, weeks, and/or days, and one each in-basket, out-basket, and (very important) a PRO-TIME tray.
2. Designate a "PM Period" every day when you go through your in-basket of unsorted (e)mail and delete unnecessary stuff/tasks, date/delay for another time, delegate to others (out-basket), or... DO THEM NOW!
3. As part of your delay file, place journals, catalogs, or other professional readings in a professional read tray (PRO-TIME), but regularly schedule daily/weekly time to do "silent and sustained reading."
4. Allow NO unsorted pieces of paper to ever infiltrate the surface of your desk.

All about TIME... and the Four D's

- ✓ Do It!
- ✓ Delegate It!
- ✓ Date It!
- ✓ Dump It!

<http://www.prioritymanagement.com/>
<https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/4-14-16-of-productivity>


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Daily PRO-TIME



1. Read an article in a professional journal or digital newsletter.
2. Write your own article or blog post for a professional e-publication.
3. "Keep up your chops" on your instrument or voice. Practice every day!
4. Keep up with your "musicianship training" like ear training, sight-reading, and score reading. Pull out a copy of *Elementary Training for Musicians* by Hindemith and practice exercises that make you sing in syllables, tap a different rhythm independently with your left hand, conduct the beat pattern with your right hand, and beat your foot to the pulse. OR revisit your college solfeggio assignments, and of course, sight-singing or playing-at-sight anything new-to-your-eyes is most beneficial.
5. Take time to compose or arrange your own "Mr. Holland's Opus."



<https://paulfox.blog/2017/12/01/help-how-does-one-keep-up/>


<https://paulfox/care.blog/>

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Daily PRO-TIME



6. Perform or improvise on the piano or guitar, rotating weekly to different musical styles and forms.
7. Is it time to learn a new instrument? When was the last time you crossed the break on the clarinet, drilled in paradiddles on the snare drum, OR shifted to third position on the violin? Can you play as well as your beginning students?
8. If you're not a piano wizard or an accomplished accompanist, try your hand at sight reading several different voice parts simultaneously from choral octavos. OR can you transpose and play "at-sight" a musical phrase from a full score? (Those French Horn parts always challenged this violist!)




<https://paulfox.blog/2017/12/01/help-how-does-one-keep-up/>

<https://paulfox/care.blog/>

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Admin Help



<https://paulfox.blog/2025/11/05/admins-helping-teachers/>

Self-Care Cookbook 2.0



Recipes and Resources for School Leaders

Paul K. Fox, PMEA Council for Teacher Training, Recruitment, & Retention
Monday, December 8, 2025 - 11:00 AM - 12:05 PM
Empire Ball - Hershey Lodge & Convention Center

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Manifesto for a Good Weekend






*Connect.
Care.
Play.
Go green.
Seek beauty.
Do less.*

*Don't make plans, make space.
Wander.
Wonder.
Be.
Repeat next weekend.*

Keep close at hand the phrase New Agers love: "Busy is a decision." — Katrina Onstad

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Manifesto for a Good Weekend






Chapter 1: What is a Weekend?
Chapter 2: The Rise and Fall of the Weekend
Chapter 3: The Need to Connect
Chapter 4: Binge, Buy, Brunch, Basketball – Better Recreation
Chapter 5: Do Less and Be More at Home
Chapter 6: The Power of Beauty
Chapter 7: Manifesto for a Good Weekend



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Books and More Books



Additional resources: <https://paulfox.blog/category/care/> - OR - <https://paulfox.blog/care/>

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CODA: Motivating Beliefs



Share with your neighbor...

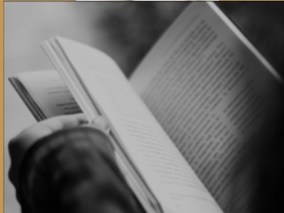
1. Something new you learned today.
2. One “personal prescription” for improving your own health & wellness.

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CODA: Motivating Beliefs



- ✓ I am worthy of better and change is possible for me right now.
- ✓ I set my own expectations in life and in teaching.
- ✓ I know what is important and allocate time accordingly.
- ✓ I ensure my needs are met to prevent overwhelm and exhaustion. — Angela Watson


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