

# Compassion Fatigue and Staff Self-Care: Resources for Leaders

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Intermediate District #287

6/27/18

# Housekeeping and Learning Intentions

- Please care for yourself
  - Water
  - Bathrooms
  - Breaks, standing, questions and conversation welcome at any time
  
- Learning Intentions
  - Define compassion fatigue and related terms
  - Discuss school systems contributing to compassion fatigue and what to do
  - Define self-care
  - Receive seven subject-based professional development strategies and activities

# Sympathy and Empathy

[Short video](#)



# Definitions

# Simplistic Pre-Definitions

Debate and disagreement abound!

Sympathy - feeling sorry for or about another's pain

Empathy - walking in another's shoes/deeper understanding of another's pain

Compassion - feeling moved, when another is suffering, to relieve suffering

- Action toward helping, lessening, alleviating

Altruism - selfless behavior or ideals associated with compassion

# Biology and Compassion

When a person is compassionate or shows compassion ([source](#)):

- Heart rate slows
- Oxytocin released
- Brain “lights up” in empathy, caregiving, and pleasure centers

[Short video](#)



Photo: Zoo Zürich, Samuel Furrer via littlethings.com

# Compassion Paradox

We are designed to care for each other and it makes us happy

BUT

Sometimes it's too hard, too much, or too (fill in the blank)



# Self-Assessment

[Assessment Tool](#)



# Compassion Satisfaction

- Positive feelings about ability to help and doing work well
- Feeling good about colleagues, ability to contribute to work and society
- Strive for high levels of compassion satisfaction
- All the things not related to compassion fatigue (risk and protective factors caveat - one does not mean the opposite is true)

# Compassion Fatigue

Definitions vary, are broad or narrow, and are controversial

For our purposes, compassion fatigue is:

- **Burnout + Secondary Traumatic Stress (Stamm/ProQOL)**
  - Burnout: gradual, cumulative, negative, hopeless
  - Secondary traumatic stress: sudden, event-based, pervasive (sleep, thoughts)
  
- **Talk a bit about burnout and a bit about secondary traumatic stress**
  - Come back to compassion fatigue

# Burnout

- One part of compassion fatigue
- Can occur without empathy and compassion
- Slow onset, cumulative build up
- Adult (teacher) centered
- 12 phases (Freudenberger and North, 1985)
- Factors leading to burnout may include (source):
  - Poor preparation programs, especially for behavior management
  - Lack of autonomy
  - High levels of maladaptive student behavior
  - Interpersonal conflict and lack of support
  - Routinization and boredom

# Secondary Traumatic Stress

- One part of compassion fatigue
- Empathy and compassion are present, high levels
  - Those in helping profession may be more likely to already be fatigued (selection bias, [source](#))
- Can be cumulative, may be more likely to be situational or event-based
- More likely to be rapid-onset
- Adult (teacher) involved but child (student) centered
- Signs and symptoms of Secondary Traumatic Stress:
  - Hypervigilance and fear
  - Sleeplessness and chronic exhaustion
  - Physical unwellness/ailment
  - Inability to listen
  - Minimizing
  - Guilt
  - Very similar to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

# Compassion Fatigue

For our purposes, compassion fatigue is:

- Burnout + Secondary Traumatic Stress (Stamm/ProQOL)
  - Burnout: gradual, cumulative, negative, hopeless
  - Secondary traumatic stress: sudden, event-based, pervasive (sleep, thoughts)
  
- Secondary Traumatic Stress and Compassion Fatigue often used interchangeably

# Compassion Fatigue

- Nurse C. Joinson first used “compassion fatigue” in 1992 and described a “loss in ability to nurture” ([source](#))
- C. R. Figley first used “compassion fatigue” in 1995 and defined it as “Compassion Fatigue is a state experienced by those helping people or animals in distress; it is an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it can create a secondary traumatic stress for the helper” ([source](#))

# Compassion Fatigue

- Research in many helping fields (health care, social sciences, vet sciences)
- Compassion fatigue synonyms: secondary trauma, secondary traumatic stress, vicarious trauma, empathic distress, empathic fatigue
- Signs and symptoms in isolation are normal expressions of stress
  - Changing or building into maladaptive or disruptive levels
- Paradox: we must help and care *BUT* helping and caring is impossible



# Compassion Fatigue

5 phases of Compassion Fatigue adapted from/generally attributed to Eric Gentry

1. Zealot: energy, enthusiasm, committed, extra hours, motivated by ideals
2. Irritability: cut corners, avoid, unfocused, forego or degrade own self-care, isolate, mock or complain
3. Withdrawal: exhausted, hopeless, loses patience with students, defensive, neglects self and others, views self as victim
4. Zombie: disdain for students, views others as incompetent, no compassion, autopilot, easily enraged
5. Pathology & Victimization: no action, overwhelmed, physically ill, leave profession **OR**
6. Maturation & Renewal: conscious choice, strength, renewal, resilience

# Compassion Fatigue

Signs and symptoms ([source](#))

- Fight/Flight/Freeze responses
- Blaming others, complaining about administration
- Isolation, apathy, poor self-care, compulsive behaviors (addictions)
- Nightmares, flashbacks
- Somatic empathy ([source](#))
  - Visceral, involuntary feeling in gut of empathy
- Physical responses ([source](#))
  - Nausea, headaches, dizziness, trouble hearing

# Compassion Fatigue Demoralization

- We know well the importance of teaching empathy and valuing empathy in our schools as part of a larger Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and/or Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework (see CASEL for lots of research)
- Teachers tend to be highly empathetic and compassionate people, driven to do the job by morals and ethics
- Leading into a crisis of demoralized teachers (Santoro)
  - Sources of demoralization: causing harm and degrading the profession
    - Harm: standardized testing, prescribed curriculum, academic achievement at all costs
    - Degrading: performance pay, top-down mandates and pressures, fast-track licensures, prescription or corruption of the art of teaching and supportive staff development (PLCs)
- Here we sit, charged with employing and retaining a whole person

# Discussion

# Discussion

- What do we do now?

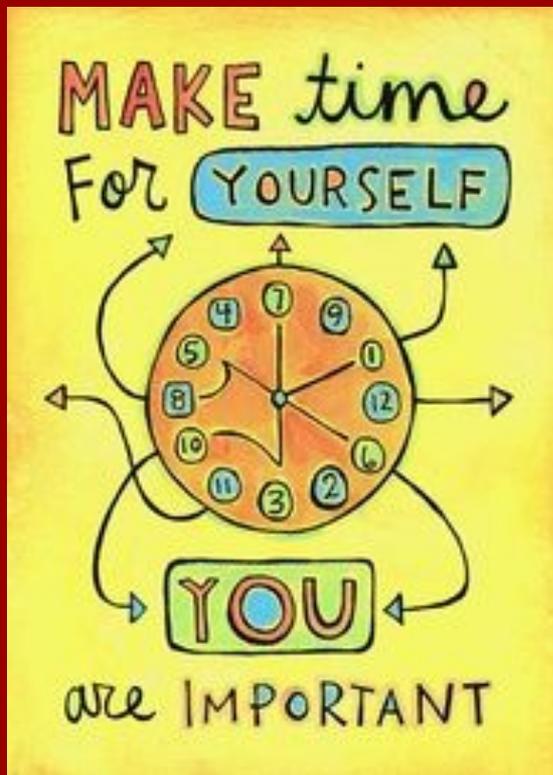


# Discussion

- Focus on Equity and Social Justice (related [article](#) and [TED Talk](#)) to engage in action on behalf of others instead of kindness, foster empathy while engaging in systems change
- Use good pedagogy on staff: use school-wide meeting protocols, give learning intentions/action items/expectations for next steps (be clear, give permission, say what to do if there's difficulty or problems)
- Adopt school-wide SEL/PBIS framework: help and expect staff to achieve highest standards of values too (not just for students), common language and value structure (students, staff, school, community)
- Professional Development: differentiated and with choice, give information about trauma informed teaching
- Staff climate: watch out for each other and encourage staff culture that's caring and watchful

# Discussion

- Staff community: foster safe communities of support made of and for teachers/school staff and allow space/time during the day for connection
- Assess and analyze: collect data from multiple sources (staff performance evaluations, ProQOL, observations, etc.) and analyze; protect anonymity and reduce risk
- Encourage healthy boundaries: watch your overworkers, revisit and discuss ethics frequently, facilitate debriefing, make it okay to say no (or yes)
- Mindfulness ([research](#))
- Watch for tipping point into compassion fatigue, catch early
- **Focus on Self-Care**



# Self Care Sessions

Samantha Thompson, M.Ed., SEL Coordinator ISD 287

# ✘ WHAT SELF-CARE ISN'T

So we've covered the fact that self-care is different for everyone and that all individuals have different needs to meet in order to be mentally and emotionally healthy. There is no ultimate guide for self-care because it is such an individual thing; however, here are some handy pointers on what self-care does not mean.

## A SIGN OF WEAKNESS

You are never weak for taking the time to care for yourself. Actually, prioritizing your self-care is bound to ensure your mental and physical health, and through that, your strength as an individual.



## ONLY EMOTIONAL CARE

Self-care techniques can be as emotionally rooted as journaling or as physical as going to the gym. Taking care of yourself comes in all types of packages.



## ONLY FOR SOME PEOPLE

It doesn't matter who you are -- caring for yourself is important. Feelings of being run down and exhausted don't discriminate... and neither does the need for self-care.



## SOMETHING TO KEEP QUIET

Keep talking about self-care! Exchange self-care techniques and start a campus-wide conversation. It's our responsibility to look after ourselves and to look out for each other.



## THE SAME FOR EVERYONE

Your self-care routine is likely very different from your friend's, from your sister's, from your professor's -- and that's okay. Every individual is different, and so are our self-care needs.



## BUT SELF CARE IS...

... whatever it looks like to you, an extremely important and extremely healthy way to manage stress, to achieve success, and to always make sure you're doing your best.



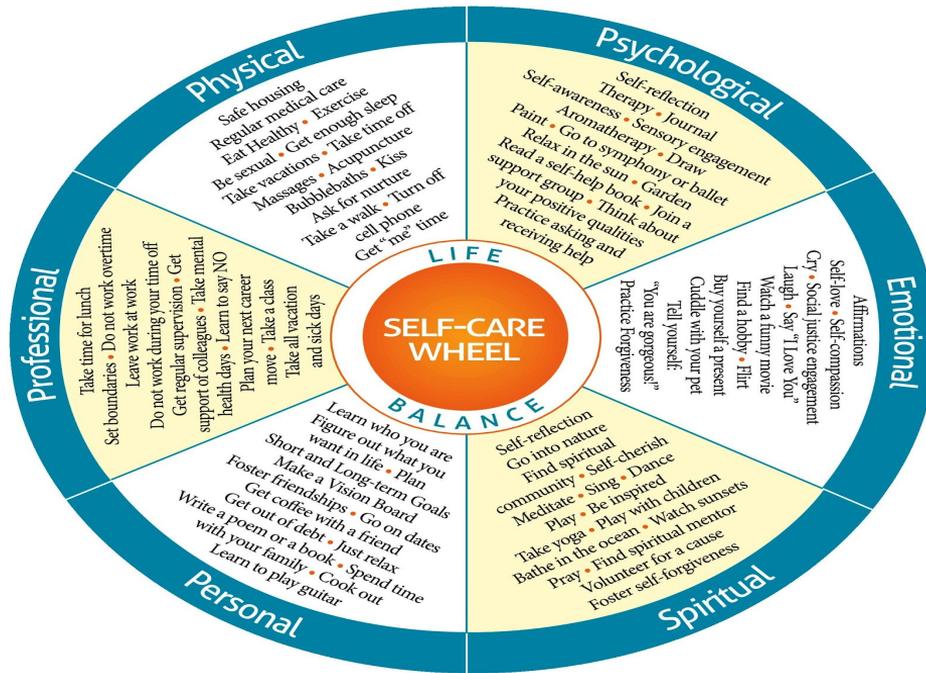
Comparison is the thief of joy.

Theodore Roosevelt

@quellfancy

What Self-Care Isn't image via University of British Columbia

# SELF-CARE WHEEL



This Self-Care Wheel was inspired by and adapted from "Self-Care Assessment Worksheet" from *Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization* by Saakvitne, Pearlman & Staff of TSI/CAAP (Norton, 1996). Created by Olga Phoenix Project: Healing for Social Change (2013). Dedicated to all trauma professionals worldwide.

[www.OlgaPhoenix.com](http://www.OlgaPhoenix.com)



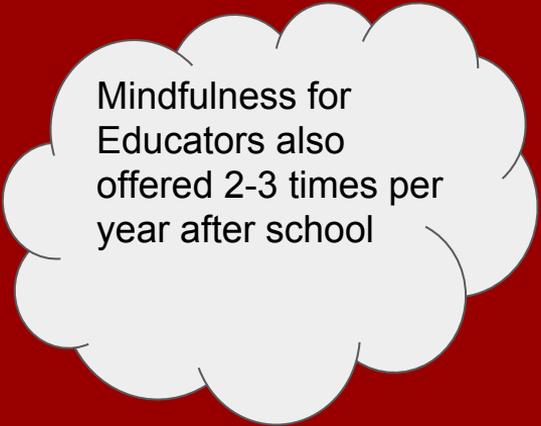
There are many doors to Self Care.

Pick Some!

# 7 Months of Self Care

October Through April

- 1- Self Awareness/Reflection
- 2- Gratitude
- 3- Team Building Board Games
- 4- Drumming
- 5- Character Strengths Team Building
- 6- Self Compassion
- 7- Allostatic Load



Mindfulness for Educators also offered 2-3 times per year after school

# SELF CARE

## Session #1

### Self Awareness/Reflection

# Teacher SELF CARE session #1

- Self Assess my own stress

- Become aware of my teammates' stress

- Assess and define current coping mechanisms

- Overall analyze and adjust

TEAM COMMUNICATION



# ABC

Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start.

Awareness

Balance

Control

## ABC Strategy

### A = AWARENESS:

- What causes you stress How do you react?

### B = BALANCE:

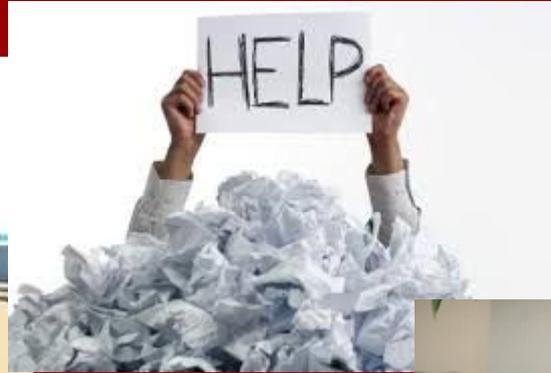
- There is a fine line between positive /negative stress.
- How much can you cope with before it becomes negative

### C = CONTROL:

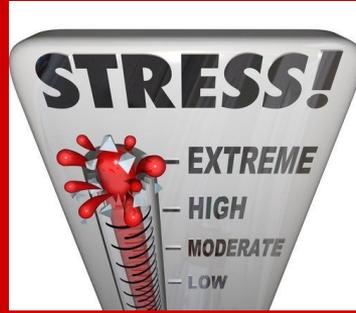
- What can you do to help yourself combat the negative effects of stress

# What Causes you Stress? What does it look like?

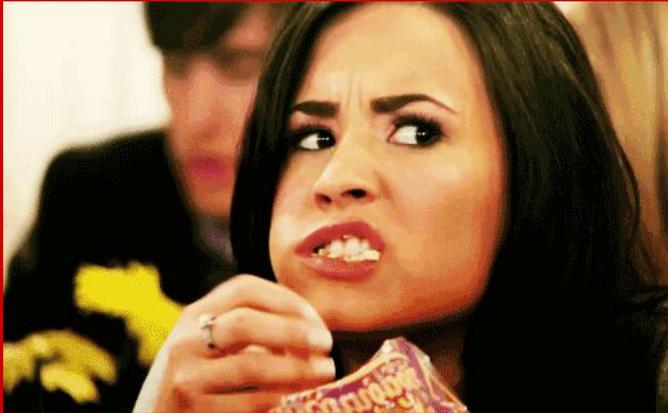
Me trying to excel in my career,  
maintain a social life, drink enough  
water, exercise, text everyone back,  
stay sane, survive and be happy



# AWARENESS



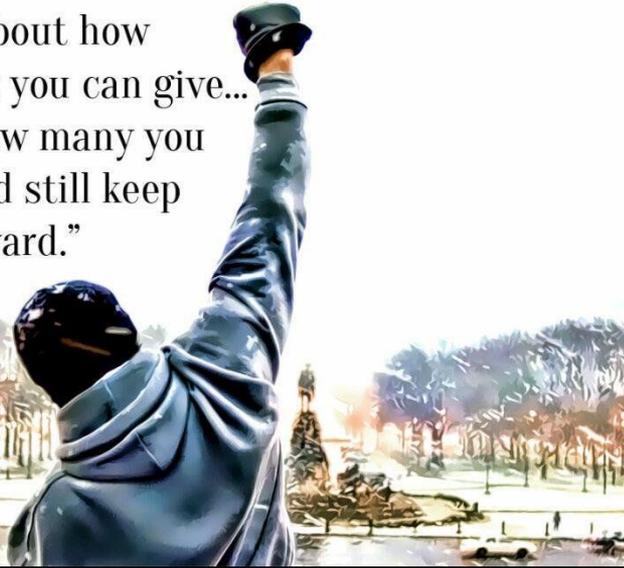
Go to [Giphy.com](https://www.giphy.com) and find what represents you.



# HR Warning Signs- HRzone.com

1. Taking more time off work than usual
2. Greater use of substances such as alcohol, tobacco and drugs (prescription and illegal)
3. Increased irritability, poor concentration, reduced productivity
4. Deteriorating personal or work relationships, including bullying behaviors
5. Becoming more 'emotional', moody or over-reactive to what others say
6. Starting to behave differently that's out of the norm
7. Changing of eating and sleep patterns
8. Physical reactions such as sweating, palpitations and increased blood pressure
9. Feeling negative, depressed and anxious most of the time
10. Feeling trapped or frustrated ... and believing there's no solution

“Life's not about how hard of a hit you can give... it's about how many you can take, and still keep moving forward.”



How does this quote resonate with you?

Do you know how many?

How might you view this in relation to your co-workers?

Take some time to reflect.

# BALANCE

# CONTROL

The battles that count aren't  
the ones for gold medals.  
The struggles within yourself  
– the invisible, inevitable  
battles inside all of us –  
**that's where it's at.**

–Jesse Owens



EmilysQuotes.Com

What works for you?

# Visual Reminder

Worditout.com



A word cloud of health and wellness activities. The words are arranged in a vertical, roughly rectangular shape. The largest word is 'Stretch'. Other prominent words include 'Breathe', 'Music', 'Connect', 'Family', 'Eat-Healthy', 'Dance', 'Gum', 'Play-Games', 'Mindful-Moment', 'Friends', 'Color', 'Laugh', 'Smile', 'Drink-Tea', 'Chew-Gum', 'Sing', 'Walk', 'Read', 'Write', and 'Mindful-Moment'. The words are in various shades of purple and magenta.

Breathe  
Read  
Mindful-Moment  
Music Write  
Connect  
Chew-Gum  
Stretch  
Friends Color Walk  
Sing Play-Games  
Gum Laugh  
Eat-Healthy  
Dance Smile  
Family  
Drink-Tea

# ABC Strategy for Stress and Self Care

Awareness-

Cause and Reaction

Balance-

Positive and Negative

Control-

Working to combat negative effects

Questions?

Suggestions?

Future Topics?

Treats next time?





Review- Remember those teaching strategies!

Have you been Aware?

Have you sought Balance?

Have you used Control Strategies?

Did you hang your posters?

Noticed/connected with coworkers?

# ABC Strategy

## A = AWARENESS:

- What causes you stress How do you react?

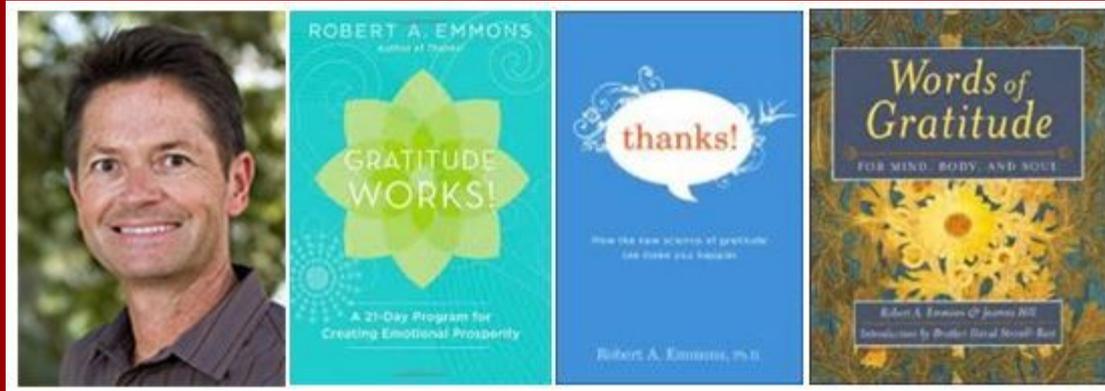
## B = BALANCE:

- There is a fine line between positive /negative stress.
- How much can you cope with before it becomes negative

## C = CONTROL:

- What can you do to help yourself combat the negative effects of stress

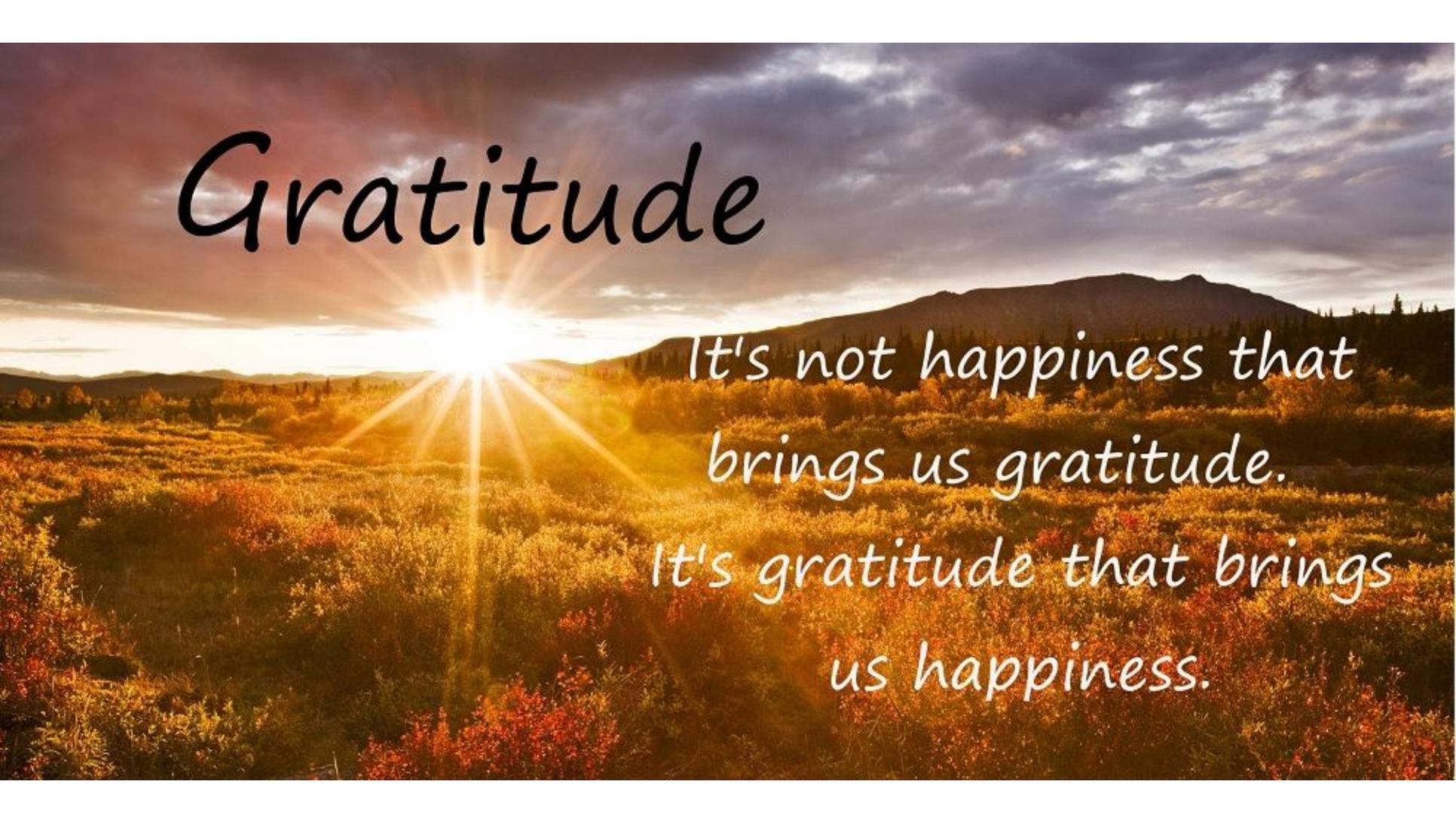
# Robert Emmons



# What Good is Gratitude?

1. Gratitude allows us to celebrate the present.
2. Gratitude blocks toxic, negative emotions- envy, resentment, regret  
-emotions that destroy happiness
3. Grateful people are more stress resistant.
4. Gratitude strengthens social ties and self worth.

# Gratitude

A scenic landscape at sunrise or sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright sunburst effect with rays of light. The foreground is a field of wildflowers in various shades of yellow, orange, and red. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains under a sky with scattered clouds. The overall mood is peaceful and inspiring.

It's not happiness that  
brings us gratitude.

It's gratitude that brings  
us happiness.

# Gratitude and Trauma

1. Gratitude is not a “vaccine” against psychological damage
2. Gratitude acts more as a fostering of post-traumatic growth than to shield from distress (in immediate aftermath of disasters)

Promising not only for US but for our STUDENTS!

FOSTERING an atmosphere for gratitude is very promising!

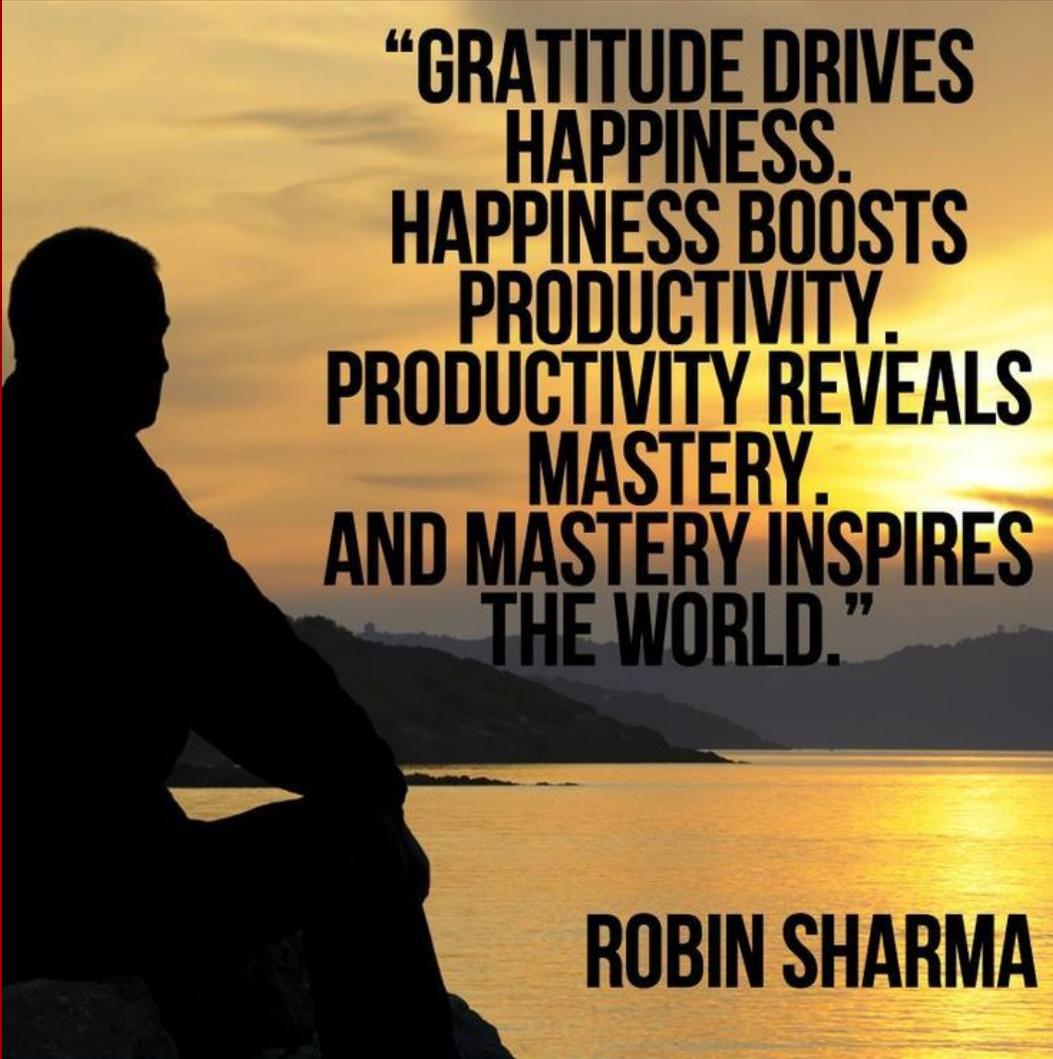
Enabling a HABIT of gratitude is the PATH!

[Greater Good Magazine-Science Based Insights for a Meaningful Life](#)



# So now what?

It Starts with YOU! It Starts with US!

A silhouette of a person sitting on a rock, looking out over a body of water towards a sunset. The sky is filled with warm, golden light, and the water reflects the sun. The person's silhouette is dark against the bright background.

**“GRATITUDE DRIVES  
HAPPINESS.  
HAPPINESS BOOSTS  
PRODUCTIVITY.  
PRODUCTIVITY REVEALS  
MASTERY.  
AND MASTERY INSPIRES  
THE WORLD.”**

**ROBIN SHARMA**

# Continued Practice: Thnx4.org

Thnx4 was created by the [Greater Good Science Center](#) (GGSC) at the University of California, Berkeley. It draws on two decades of research suggesting that people who regularly feel grateful:

- report better health, reduce their risk of heart disease, and get better sleep
- strengthen feelings of connection and satisfaction in their relationships
- feel more satisfied with their lives, more joy and optimism, and less anxiety.

# Go to Thnx4.org

- \* Group Gratitude Challenge
- \*Run by UC-Berkeley
- \*PRIZES!!
- \*You choose when to do it
- \*Need a Chief Gratitude Officer to set Everything up and get everyone started

Follow these steps and  
you are ready for the

**21 day  
Gratitude  
challenge**

Beginning November 27!

# What Else??

## Our Objectives

1. What good is gratitude?  
-Dr. Emmons
2. How does gratitude relate to trauma?
3. Gratitude Practices

What else  
can we do to  
build a habit  
of gratitude  
here?

# Self Care #3

Team Building with Board Games



## #NationalHumorMonth

Why don't they  
play board games in  
the jungle?

Too many  
CHEETAHS!



If you're not prepared  
to lose every friend  
you have over a  
board game,  
you're not playing  
hard enough.

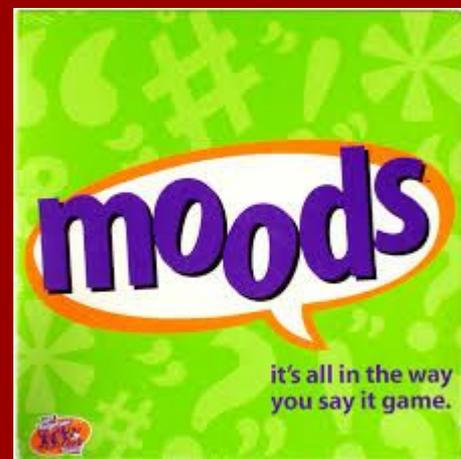
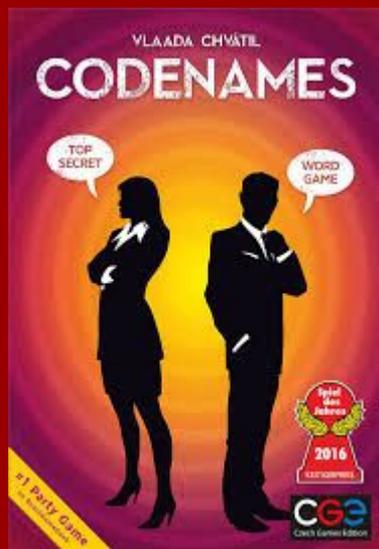
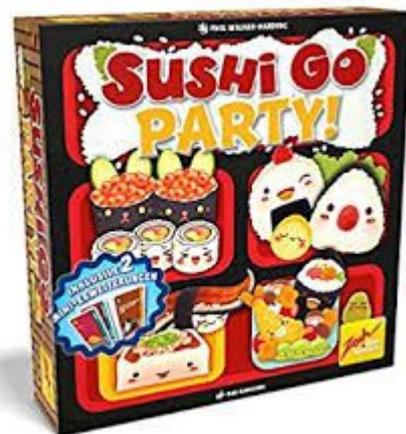
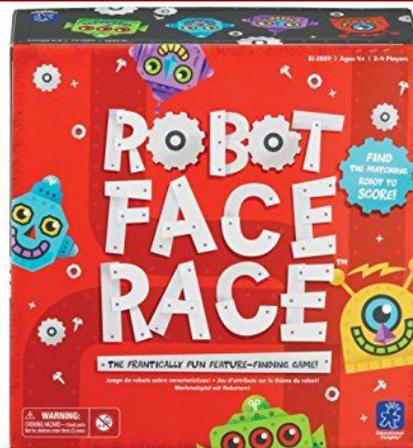
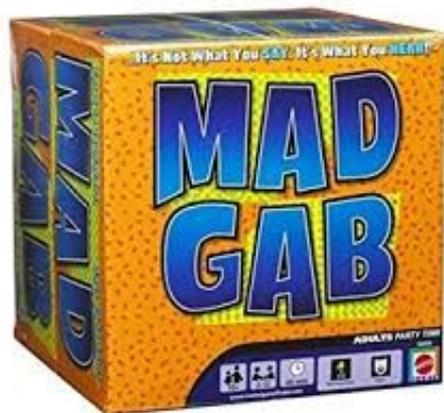


someecards  
user card

# Benefits for you

1. Playing board games builds relationships.
2. Playing board games engage our minds and mental health.
3. Playing board games help develop decision-making practices.
4. Cutting the cord off the screen and off of work.
5. Fun and play

let's  
DO  
this!



# Self Care #4

## -Activity Based-

## Health Rhythms Drumming

What can we do together to actively  
engage in SELF CARE?

# Self Care #5

Character Strengths

<https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register>



Survey with “Science of Character” Video

Samantha

Zest Hope Perspective  
 Social intelligence love of learning hope  
 Creativity · Love · Hope · Self regulation · Leadership · Zest

Zest Hope Love

Social Intelligence Leadership Curiosity  
 love of learning, leadership, Gratitude

Creativity Love Spirituality

appreciation of beauty and excellence, love, kindness

KINDNESS, HUMILITY, HOPE

Hope, Gratitude, Social intelligence

1. Kindness 2. Zest 3. Creativity

Creativity Gratitude teamwork

Zest creativity hope

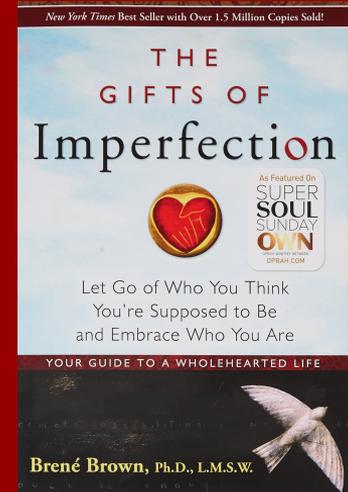
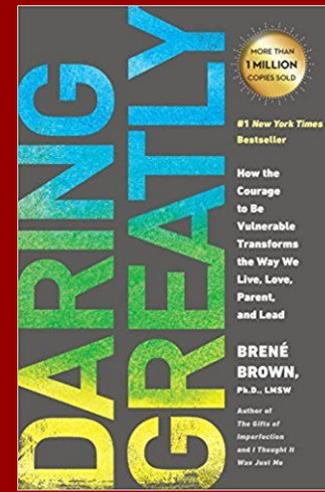
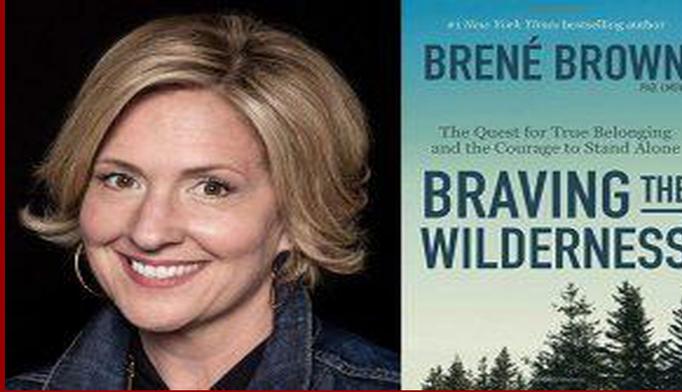
Before the survey- Think about your community and "secretly" guess each person's top character traits

After the survey- While waiting for everyone to finish, create a visual of your own top traits

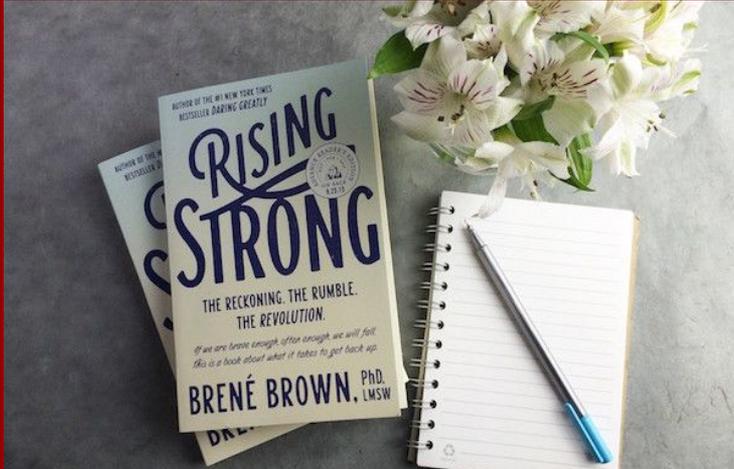


Self Compassion

Self Care #6



# EXPLORE Your Emotions!



# Suck it up?

Shame drives two tapes:

1)Not good enough.

2)Who do you think you are?

Emotion is driving, thought and behavior are  
In the trunk.

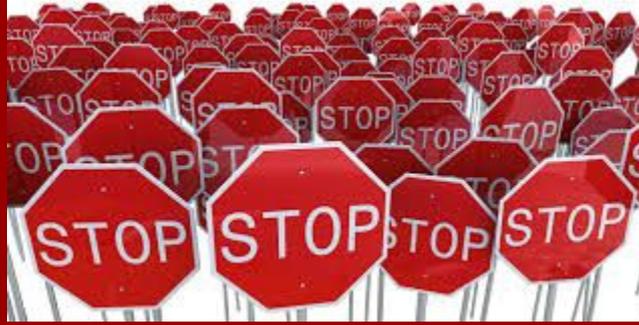
No conspiracies!

What am I feeling? What do I know about this?

**WE CANNOT  
SELECTIVELY  
NUMB EMOTIONS,  
WHEN WE NUMB  
THE PAINFUL  
EMOTIONS, WE  
ALSO NUMB THE  
POSITIVE  
EMOTIONS.**

*Brene Brown*

[WWW.CHRISTIEINGE.COM](http://WWW.CHRISTIEINGE.COM)



Stop Being a Jerk to Yourself!

Treat yourself like you would a good friend.



# Self Compassion Practice



Kristin Neff- leading and pioneering researcher  
self-compassion



# 10 guideposts FOR WHOLEHEARTED LIVING

FROM BRENE BROWN'S BOOK

"THE GIFTS OF IMPERFECTION"

## Letting Go Of

## Cultivating

WHAT PEOPLE THINK

PERFECTIONISM

NUMBING + POWERLESSNESS

SCARCITY + FEAR OF THE DARK

NEED FOR CERTAINTY

COMPARISON

EXHAUSTION AS A STATUS  
SYMBOL + PRODUCTIVITY AS SELF-WORTH

ANXIETY  
AS A LIFESTYLE

SELF DOUBT +  
"SUPPOSED TO"

BEING COOL + "ALWAYS  
IN CONTROL"

AUTHENTICITY

Self ♥ Compassion

a RESILIENT SPIRIT

GRATITUDE + JOY

Intuition & trusting FAITH

CREATIVITY

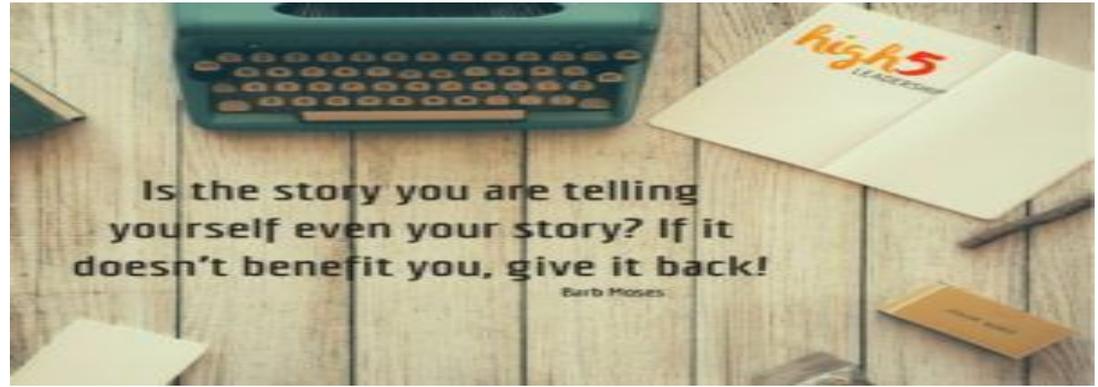
Play + REST

Calm + STILLNESS

MEANINGFUL WORK

laughter,  
Songs & Dance

[dailygood.org](https://dailygood.org)



Expressive writing can help us gain new perspective on the challenges we face.

Writing about a troubling event for 15 minutes each day for 4 days has been shown to decrease mental anguish, improve physical health, and increase work attendance.

As you write about the troubling event, you begin to make sense of it, and can quiet the thoughts around it that consume your mind.

Self Care #7

Allostatic Load

# Every Stress Your Body Goes Through Has a Cumulative Effect





# Negative Impacts of High Allostatic Load

## On our body:

- Headache
- Muscle Tension/Pain
- Cardiovascular
- Fatigue
- Stomach Upset
- Sleep Problems
- Immune function
- Metabolic/Cardio/Respiratory
- Inflammation



## On our mind:

- Anxiety
- Lack of Motivation
- Memory Problems
- Irritability and Anger
- Sadness or Depression
- Restlessness

## On our behavior:

- Angry Outbursts
- Avoidance of Important Activities
- Over or Undereating
- Social Withdrawal
- Drug/Alcohol Abuse



My Very Own Regimen-

What do you do for your own self care?

Do you do it as much as you think you need?

What do you need to add to your self care regimen?



# Year in Review

- ❑ Administrator sponsored, but not attended
- ❑ Administratively prioritized
- ❑ No one hated everything
- ❑ Everyone had a different favorite
- ❑ We are continuing this year
- ❑ QUESTIONS?

## Contact Info:

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Samantha Thompson

[sjthompson@district287.org](mailto:sjthompson@district287.org)

# Resources

*Demoralized: Why Teachers Leave the Profession They Love and How They Can Stay* by Doris A. Santoro (2018); [interview/short article with Santoro](#)

[Greater Good Science Center](#) and [Greater Good Magazine](#)

[thnx4.org](#)

[National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)

[Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project](#)

[Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#)

Thank You!