

MENTAL WELLBEING

In Schools

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DEC 2024

ISSUE 4

PRIORITIZING REST AND REFLECTION: ENDING THE YEAR WITH SELF-CARE

As the year comes to a close, December often brings a mix of joy, stress, and fatigue for educators. Between holiday preparations, wrapping up the semester, and managing classroom expectations, it's easy to forget the importance of rest and self-care. This month, our newsletter focuses on self-care strategies for educators, setting boundaries for the holiday season, and the benefits of rest and reflection for long-term well-being.



THE GIFT OF SELF-CARE: SIMPLE STRATEGIES FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Taking care of yourself is not selfish—it's essential. During the holiday season, educators often face added pressures, from managing end-of-year classroom activities to balancing personal commitments. Prioritizing self-care can help you approach the season with calm and clarity.

Self-Care Tips for December:

- **Take Mini Breaks During the Day:** Even five minutes of deep breathing, stretching, or stepping outside for fresh air can recharge your energy.
- **Set Holiday Priorities:** Choose what matters most to you this season—whether it's family time, rest, or a creative project—and let go of unnecessary obligations.
- **Practice Gratitude Daily:** Reflect on one thing you're grateful for each day. Studies show that gratitude improves mood and resilience, even during busy times.

Suggested Activity for Educators:

- **Create a "Self-Care Tree":** Decorate a small tree or wall chart with self-care goals for the season. Each ornament represents a task or activity you'll do for yourself, like reading a book, taking a walk, or spending time with loved ones.

"You cannot pour from an empty cup. Take care of yourself first."

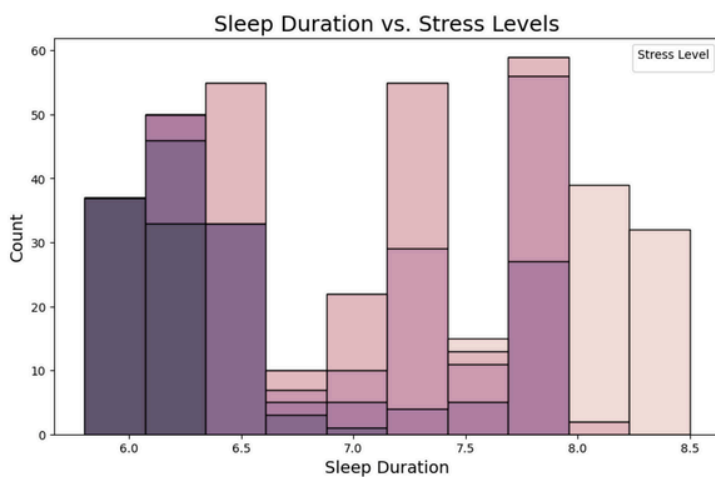
– Anonymous

BOUNDARIES FOR THE HOLIDAYS: PROTECTING YOUR ENERGY

While the holidays are a time for giving, overextending yourself can lead to burnout. Establishing healthy boundaries can help you enjoy the season without feeling drained.

Tips for Setting Boundaries:

- **Say “No” When Needed:** Politely decline extra responsibilities or invitations that don’t align with your energy or priorities.
- **Plan for Downtime:** Block out time in your schedule to rest or engage in activities that replenish you. Treat these blocks as non-negotiable appointments with yourself.
- **Limit Screen Time:** Reduce exposure to email or work-related tasks over the holiday break. If possible, set an out-of-office reply and stick to it.



"The Positive Impact of Rest on Educator Stress Levels"

Teachers who report getting 7–8 hours of sleep consistently have significantly lower levels of work-related stress.

THE SCIENCE OF REST: WHY YOU DESERVE TO RECHARGE

Rest isn’t just about sleeping—it’s about giving your mind and body the chance to recover and process the demands of life. For educators, taking time to rest is crucial for maintaining creativity, focus, and emotional resilience.

Benefits of Rest and Reflection:

- **Boosts Creativity:** A well-rested brain is better at problem-solving and generating new ideas.
- **Improves Emotional Regulation:** Rest lowers stress levels and helps you respond more calmly to challenges.
- **Strengthens Relationships:** Taking time to recharge allows you to be more present and engaged with loved ones.

Reflection Activity for December:

Set aside time to reflect on the past year. Consider these prompts:

1. What accomplishments, big or small, am I most proud of this year?
2. What challenges taught me the most about myself?
3. How can I carry what I’ve learned into the new year?



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BUILDING A VISION FOR THE NEW YEAR: SETTING INTENTIONS

While December is a time for rest, it's also an opportunity to set positive intentions for the year ahead. Instead of focusing on resolutions, which often feel like obligations, consider setting flexible goals that align with your personal and professional values.

Intentional Goal-Setting Framework:

- **Start Small:** Choose one or two achievable goals that genuinely excite you.
- **Make it Measurable:** Be specific about what success looks like. For example, "I'll dedicate 10 minutes daily to mindfulness" instead of "I'll practice mindfulness."
- **Celebrate Progress:** Acknowledge small victories along the way. This builds momentum and keeps you motivated.

CAPACITY BUILDING:

- **61st Washington Policy Seminar**, Sign-up today March 17th - 19th. Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL)
- **Unbound 2024**, Sign-up today, December 12th - Unbound Ed



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