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The ROVER RECHARGE

Caring for Ourselves Together

"Take care of your body. It's the only place you have to live." — Jim Rohn

6 Summer Fitness Tips

From Laura Smestad

As we wrap up a long, demanding school year and finally shake off the cold winter months, I just want to say—we have all earned this time. Summer is our time of year to recharge, reset, and take care of yourself in ways that can be hard to prioritize during the school year. I wanted to share a few easy and realistic fitness tips to help you make the most of the break—physically, mentally, and emotionally.

1. Get Moving (And Keep It Enjoyable)

After many months of structured and sometimes chaotic schedules, try to think of movement as freedom rather than another obligation. Long walks outside, bike rides, swimming, hiking, or even playing with your kids all count as physical activity. Aim to move your body as much as you can, without stressing about or overcomplicating it.

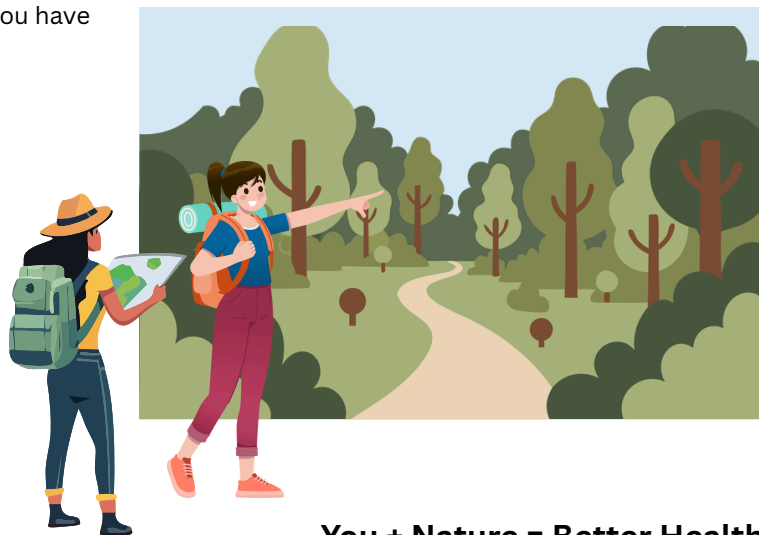
2. Consider Strength Training

If you're not already lifting weights, summer is a great time to start. It doesn't need to be fancy, expensive, or 0-100 in intensity—just 2-3 days per week of basic resistance training can provide endless benefits such as:

- Increased energy levels and better metabolism
- Building lean body mass (muscle) and supporting fat loss
- Better joint health, better posture, less pain
- Better cardiovascular health and functional strength for activities of daily living (ADL's) to enhance longevity for all
- Building strength and confidence and reshaping your physique
- And much, much more

If you are already lifting, this is a great time to refocus on your personal goals or even revamp your regimen with a new program. If you need a roadmap, don't hesitate to contact me.

Cont. p. 2



You + Nature = Better Health

According to a 2025 article from UCLA Health, "Prioritizing your health isn't only about how you spend your time. Where you spend your time can also make a difference." Nature is often overlooked as a powerful tool for healing—yet research continues to show its wide-ranging benefits for both body and mind.

The American Psychological Association (APA) recommends spending at least two hours per week outdoors to experience measurable health benefits. These include a boosted immune system, enhanced cognitive function, improved heart health, better sleep quality, reduced stress, increased physical activity, and improved mental health.

Time in nature increases vitamin D levels and exposes us to phytoncides—natural compounds released by trees that support immune function. Immersing yourself in green space, sometimes called "forest bathing," has been shown to increase white blood cells that help fight infections.

Nature also supports clearer thinking and creativity—especially in peaceful, natural settings. Studies indicate that time outdoors can lower blood pressure, regulate circadian rhythms for better sleep, and significantly reduce cortisol (stress hormone) levels in as little as 20-30 minutes. Physical activity feels more enjoyable outdoors as well, often leading to longer and more consistent exercise

Cont. p. 2

6 Summer Fitness Tips, *cont.*

3. Make Time for Real Food

With a bit more flexibility in your schedule, take the time to prepare and eat nutritiously (grilling, anyone?). Focus on:

- Lean proteins
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Simple, balanced, easy-to-make meals
- Healthy eating doesn't have to be restrictive—it can (and should) be satisfying and enjoyable.

4. Prioritize Rest and Sleep

Your body and mind have been running hard all year. Give yourself permission to:

- Enjoy slow mornings when you can
- Go to bed earlier and actually attempt 7-8 hours of sleep
- Take breaks without guilt

Recovery is often overlooked and is just as important as activity.

5. Manage Stress Intentionally

Even in summer, life can still feel busy. Find ways to decompress:

- Spend time outdoors with nature
- Limit screen time when possible (especially before bed!)
- Try light stretching, breathing exercises, yoga, meditation, or just quiet time

6. Be Present with Family and Friends

This is one of the biggest wins of summer. Use the extra time to enjoy, laugh, and make memories with the people who mean the most to you. That kind of connection does more for your overall health than any workout plan.

You + Nature = Better Health, *cont.*

habits. Even mental health improves: people who spend five or more hours outside on weekends show a lower risk of mild depression than those who spend less than 30 minutes outdoors.

The message is simple and encouraging: nature is not a luxury—it is a necessity. Whether it's a morning walk, time at a local park, gardening, or simply sitting in the sunshine, small moments outside can lead to meaningful improvements in overall well-being. As we move into the coming weeks of summer, let's challenge ourselves to step outside, breathe deeply, and allow nature to recharge us. Our bodies and minds will thank us.



You don't need to be perfect this summer. Focusing on daily movement, healthy habits, and a little more attention to your mental well-being can go a long way. If you ever want help getting started with a routine, learning proper lifting technique, or just need some guidance, feel free to reach out—I'm always happy to help.

Enjoy every minute of your break—you've more than earned it and we all know it will fly by!

Yours in Health,
Laura

Laura Smestad, MS, CSCS
Gym Teacher | Personal Trainer | Natural Bodybuilder |
Menopause Coaching Specialist

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Are you thinking, *this all sounds great, but how do I get started?* Here are a few simple tips they recommend:

- **Explore your community:** Look for hiking trails and parks that you may not have visited before.
- **Get an outdoor hobby:** Try gardening or birdwatching for added motivation to be outside.
- **Start small:** Even a 5-minute nature walk can be beneficial for your mood.
- **Volunteer for a local park or environmental club:** You'll get to spend time outside and may make some like-minded friends.

<https://www.uclahealth.org/news/article/7-health-benefits-spending-time-nature>

Sourdough Is Not for the Weak of Heart!

Kelly Keegan

About a year ago, I started baking sourdough bread—and when people say you learn something new with every loaf, it's absolutely true. After watching way too many baking videos on Instagram and TikTok, sourdough slowly took over my feed. Eventually, I decided to give it a try. Between the health benefits and the need for a new hobby, I was in.

Sourdough is made with natural yeast and good bacteria, which give it that signature flavor and texture. The fermentation process can make it easier to digest, helps stabilize blood sugar levels, and allows better absorption of nutrients like iron and magnesium. Unlike many store-bought breads, it doesn't contain commercial yeast, added sugars, or preservatives.

I created my starter (her name is Bubbles), and while I've had a few setbacks—including quitting for a month—I've really grown to love the process. I even hosted a mini-professional development session earlier this year!

If you're ready to dive into the world of sourdough, I'd love to share some of Bubbles with you! To get you going, I've included a simple starter guide and my go-to Basic Sourdough Bread recipe. I definitely recommend watching a few tutorial videos first to get a feel for the rhythm. Just shoot me an email if you want some starter, and I'll bring it in for you. I could talk sourdough all day, so don't hesitate to reach out with questions!

My favorite influencers are:

thatsourdoughgal

amy.bakes.bread

Brynn_ann thesourdoughnerd

Radical Rest: Why Sleep Isn't Always the Answer

Ever sleep ten hours and wake up drained? In *Sacred Rest*, Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith explains that we often try to fix a rest deficit with sleep. However, true recovery requires addressing seven specific areas:

Seven Types of Rest - Deficits and Solutions:

Mental - Your brain won't stop "looping" student issues or to-do lists. Solution - Keep a "brain dump" notepad by your bed; take short breaks every 90 minutes.

- **Sensory** - Overstimulated by bright lights, loud hallways, and constant notifications. Solution - 10 minutes of silence in a dark room; noise-canceling headphones.
- **Emotional** - Carrying the weight of others' struggles without a safe place to vent. Solution - Time with a "no-filter" friend or journaling without judgment.
- **Social** - Feeling "on" and performing for students, parents, and staff. Solution - Spending time with people who don't require anything from you—or total solitude.



Simple Sourdough Starter

Day 1: Mix ½ cup flour with ¼ cup warm water. Stir until smooth, cover loosely, and let sit at room temperature.

Days 2–7: Discard half each day and feed with the same amounts.

Ready when: Bubbly, slightly tangy, and doubles in size within a few hours.

Tips: Use unbleached flour, keep loosely covered, and don't worry if you see liquid on top—just stir or pour it off and feed.

Basic Sourdough Bread

Ingredients:

- 500g flour
- 350g water
- 100g starter
- 10g salt

Steps:

1. Mix ingredients until shaggy; let rest.
2. Stretch and fold every 30 minutes (2 hours total).
3. Let rise until puffy and slightly jiggly.
4. Shape into a ball and place in a floured bowl.
5. Bake at 450°F: 20 minutes covered, then 20–25 minutes uncovered.
6. Cool completely before slicing.

- **Creative** - Feeling "stale" or unable to problem-solve. Suggestion - Turning off the "how-to" brain and simply enjoying beauty (a museum, a park, a poem).
- **Spiritual** - Feeling like a "cog in a machine" rather than a person with a purpose. Solution - Meditation, community service, or connecting to a "big picture" belief.
- **Physical** - Aching muscles, poor circulation, or general lethargy. Solution - Naps, stretching, or a "slow moment" in your favorite chair.

The Takeaway?

Rest shouldn't be something we do only when we hit a wall. It is a proactive "exhale." To start, identify which area feels the most depleted today. If you've been in meetings all day (Social/Sensory), a nap (Physical) might help, but five minutes of staring at a tree in silence (Sensory/Creative) might actually be what your nervous system is begging for.

Text Neck Syndrome: A Modern-Day Posture Problem

"Technology should be a tool that serves us, not a weight that bends us. Look up; the world is wider than five inches." Anonymous

With increased use of iPads, laptops, and smartphones in both classrooms and daily life, we're seeing a rise in "Text Neck Syndrome." This refers to neck, shoulder, and upper back strain caused by looking down at devices for extended periods of time.

Why it matters:

When we tilt our heads forward to look at a screen, the weight on the neck increases significantly—putting extra stress on muscles, joints, and the spine. Over time, this can lead to:

- Neck and shoulder pain
- Headaches
- Poor posture
- Eye strain and fatigue

Both students and staff are at risk, especially with long periods of screen use during the school day. So, what can you do about it? According to an article on the Kessler Rehabilitation Center website, there are different types of reliable fixes for this problem:

Ergonomic Adjustments and Habits

- **Raise Devices:** Hold phones at eye level to prevent excessive tilting.
- **Take Breaks:** Follow the 20-20-20 rule—every 20 minutes, take 20 seconds to look at something 20 feet away.
- **Use Voice-to-Text:** Minimize downward scrolling by using voice tools.
- **Improve Posture:** Maintain an upright posture, keeping shoulders back and relaxed.
- **Setup Changes:** Use desktop stands to position screens higher.

The Power of Glimmer

We all know what "triggers" are—those small things that cue our stress response. But have you heard of **Glimmers**? Coined by Deb Dana, a glimmer is a micro-moment that cues your nervous system to feel safe, calm, and joyful. For a busy educator, finding glimmers is a way to "micro-dose" wellness throughout a chaotic day.

Unlike a major "spark of joy," a glimmer is tiny. It's the "hidden poetry" of your workday:

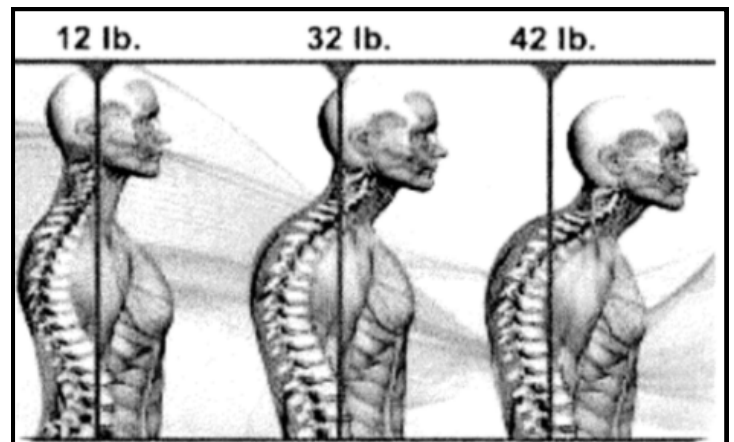
- **The Sensory:** The smell of fresh coffee, the way the sun hits your desk, or the perfect weight of a favorite pen.
- **The Relational:** A shared laugh with a colleague in the hallway or a student's genuine "thank you."

Exercises and Stretches for Relief

- **Chin Tucks:** Strengthen neck muscles and correct forward head posture.
- **Shoulder Blade Squeezes:** Target muscles in the middle back that become weak from slouching.
- **Chest Openers:** Stretch pectoral muscles to counteract rounded shoulders.
- **Cat-Cow Stretch:** Improve spine mobility.
- **Prone Scaption:** Lie face down and lift arms and chin to strengthen the posterior chain.
- **Range of Motion:** Periodically roll shoulders and turn the head left and right

So, stop playing the waiting game if you are feeling the effects of digital strain. While it usually takes 2 to 4 weeks of daily movement to see real change—and a few months for the tough cases—the secret sauce isn't just exercise. Lasting relief comes from rethinking your tech habits. The good news? Just 10 minutes a day of intentional stretching and a smarter setup can turn the tide. Your future, pain-free self will thank you.

<https://www.kesslerrehabilitationcenter.com>



For every inch of forward head posture, it can increase the weight of the head on the spine by an additional 10 pounds. Kapandji, Physiology of Joints, Vol. 3

- **The Fleeting:** Hearing your favorite song on the commute or the first breath of crisp air when you leave the building.

The 30-Second Practice:

You don't need a meditation cushion to find glimmers. You just need to notice them. When you spot one, pause for just three seconds. That's all it takes to tell your brain: "Right now, in this tiny moment, I am okay."



Getting 10% Happier By Hector Bonilla

Create a Blueprint: Reclaiming Happiness Through Mindfulness, Intentionality, and Leveraging the Power of Modern Psychology

When I turned 50 over the pandemic, I began to really reflect on what was important in my life in light of the recent changes I had seen. Loss of family, divorce, changing world conditions, and seeing aspects of my childhood redeveloped into new places while others “closed shop,” and a realization that there was more sand at the bottom of the hourglass than at the top brought me to my “mortality moment.”

I happened to see an interview with a former newscaster who had published a book based on similar experiences and later, launched a podcast– “10% Happier with Dan Harris”. While others have touted taking the “the glass is half full” approach to life, the brain research that was being cited made it clearer to me that our mental well being is an actionable byproduct of how we choose to think and the systems we build for our daily lives. I started to see it this way: You have to look at it as a craft—something that is built, not just discovered.

After reading Dan’s book, I put these titles that I found interesting in my Kindle. They deal with the behavioral science and emotional resilience that can inform the process.

- **Atomic Habits** by James Clear

While often categorized as a productivity book, this is secretly one of the best manuals for mental health ever written. Clear explains that happiness is a byproduct of the small, repeatable systems we build every day. By mastering “micro-habits,” we can break out of the cycles that keep us stuck. Big one in the influencer world.

[View Synopsis on Goodreads](#)

- **The Happiness Trap** by Russ Harris

Based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), this book challenges the idea that we should always be “happy.” Harris argues that trying to avoid “bad” feelings actually creates more suffering. He teaches how to handle difficult emotions mindfully so you can live a life guided by your values rather than your fears. I liked the idea that avoidance is an issue we don’t get a lot of advice on in securing our mental health.

[View Synopsis on Goodreads](#)

The Foundational Layer: Why “Mindset” Matters

While I looked to the previously mentioned titles to provide tools, reading Carol Dweck’s work in *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* provided a foundation many of us have talked about in the district and with our own students. Without a “Growth Mindset,” even the best advice won’t stick—it’ll just be a thought experiment.

Dweck explains that when we view our personality and mental health as “fixed,” we become fragile. We see every bad day as proof that we are broken. However, a growth mindset allows us to see mental health as a skill. It reframes failure as “data” rather than “destiny,” giving us the psychological permission to believe we are capable of change. Tony Robbins frames this in his CANI philosophy (Constant and Never-ending Improvement) which is in line with many retirement consultants that advise on ensuring meaningful mental development and engagement after employment is no longer is a component of one’s day to day routine.

Suggested Actions: Daily Practices

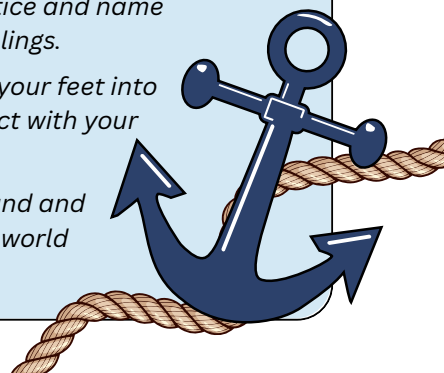
Understanding these concepts is one thing; practicing them is another. Here are three actions pulled from these experts that are doable IMHO:

- The Two-Minute Rule (Clear): Never start a new habit that takes more than two minutes. Instead of “meditating for 20 minutes,” commit to “closing my eyes for two minutes.” This removes the friction of starting.
- The “Doubler” (Achor): For two minutes each day, write down every detail you can remember about one positive experience from the last 24 hours. This forces your brain to relive the joy, effectively “doubling” the happiness boost.
- Dropping Anchor (Harris): When overwhelmed, use the “ACE” method. Acknowledge your thoughts, Come back into your body (push your feet into the floor), and Engage with the world around you.

Mindset and meditation—along with listing 10 things I am thankful for each morning in intentional gratitude—have helped me quite a bit these last few years. Self care in this area is time and effort worth the spend.

The ACE Method (Quick Reference)

- **A – Acknowledge:** Notice and name your thoughts and feelings.
- **C – Come Back:** Push your feet into the floor and reconnect with your physical body.
- **E – Engage:** Look around and focus on a task or the world around you.



Summer Fun, But Prevention, Too

By Janet Barry

The official start to summer is just weeks away and who isn't ready to slide on their flip-flops? Lazy mornings and the longer days that summer brings are always excitedly anticipated, but with both comes the need to take some precautions, too.

Mid-May gave us a sign of what is to come this summer when temperatures neared the century mark in the Lehigh Valley. Thus far, days of high heat have been sporadic, but we all know too well that sustained high temperatures become a reality as we approach the dog days of summer.

Nationally, heat-related deaths hover around 1,500 from year to year, but there are simple measures one can take to make sure that they – and their loved ones – don't become a statistic. Limiting outdoor workouts, wearing sensible clothing, and eating a hydrating diet are all things that may help you weather the summer months.

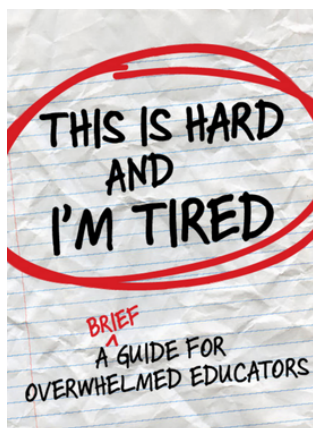
Sweating is a body's cooling mechanism and being outside – whether due to a job or activities – during the peak heat of the day may prevent you from producing enough sweat to cool down your body. Maintaining hydration is essential and can be done through water, as well as foods.

Summer offers a bounty of fruits and vegetables to aid in hydration. Watermelon, cucumbers, and oranges not only help keep your fluid levels in check, but may also offer some added health benefits, too, by adding essential nutrients to a diet. Not a fan of tap water? Add lemon or infuse with combinations like basil and strawberries or blackberries and sage to make water more palatable, which means you will drink more of it.

It is important to know your limitations, especially when the Fahrenheit freaks. Knowing your body and listening when it tells you to slow down is extremely important when outside in extreme heat. Heat stroke is a serious – and sometimes deadly – illness suffered when the body can't cool itself, while heat exhaustion is milder than heat stroke, but must be taken seriously. If you feel confused, dizzy, or nauseated, it is important to contact a medical professional immediately.

Summer offers a time to recharge, relax, and unwind, but make sure you are taking care of yourself so that you may enjoy all the benefits of that extra time in the sun.

Pets can get hot, too, so take care when walking dogs on hot concrete so their paws don't burn. If exercising outside with a pet, make sure to have plenty of water for your four-legged friend, as well, and remember, the interior of a car can rise to dangerous levels within minutes, so it is best to leave your furry friend home when running errands.



Small Shifts, Big Impact

At the March 16 in-service, Easton educators participated in a professional learning session titled, "Beyond Self-Care: Building Sustainable Educator Wellbeing," with speaker Patty McLain. The session focused on moving beyond surface-level self-care and toward a more practical,

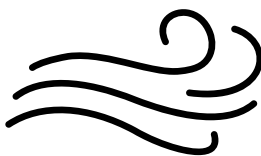
research-informed understanding of wellbeing. Educators explored how stress impacts the nervous system, how hope can be intentionally cultivated, and how small, consistent habits can build resilience over time.

Rather than adding more to already full plates, the session emphasized simple, realistic strategies that can be applied in the middle of a busy school day. Teachers reflected on small shifts they could begin immediately, from changing internal language to creating short, non-negotiable moments of regulation and reset. The goal of the work is not to ignore challenges, but to better understand how our brains and bodies respond to them, so we can navigate stress with more skill, awareness, and self-compassion.

If you'd like to learn more, you can explore her book, *This is Hard and I'm Tired*, which expands on a lot of the ideas she shared in a fairly practical, educator-friendly way. This is a link to the eBook, if you want to look it over before purchasing - [This is Hard and I'm Tired eBook](#).

Creating a Home That Helps You Exhale

by Tracy Warmtan



Long days, mental overload, and little time to recharge often leave educators and administrators craving peace, calm, and serenity. Home should be the place that restores those feelings. Romanticizing your living space for self-care and self-love isn't about expensive décor, it's about creating simple rituals, comfort, and softness that make everyday life feel more intentional. Here are a few ideas that can work in any home, even with limited space or a busy schedule:

- Create "slow moment" spaces ~ Set up a cozy chair with a reading light, a soft blanket, and a small place for your favorite mug.
- Make everyday things feel beautiful ~ Style a tray on your nightstand with lip balm, a journal, a book, and water. Use pretty containers, glass bowls, or baskets to organize makeup brushes, toiletries, or drawers. Add fruit or herbs to water for a simple touch of luxury.
- Build comforting rituals ~ Light a candle to mark the end of the workday, enjoy phone-free dinners, buy fresh flowers on Sundays, prep meals ahead of the week, or do a quick evening reset before bed.
- Create visual calm without aiming for perfection ~ Use baskets and trays to store everyday items, keep countertops from feeling cluttered, and display meaningful objects like books, framed photos, travel keepsakes, or handwritten notes.
- Bring nature indoors ~ Open the curtains each morning to let in sunlight, place plants throughout your home,

display fruit in a wooden bowl, or light a seasonal candle to make the space feel grounded and warm.

- Add sensory comfort to daily routines ~ Invest in soft sheets, layered pillows, cozy blankets, fresh flowers, or anything that makes your environment feel soothing and inviting.
- Make ordinary routines feel special ~ Play soft music while cooking or cleaning, drink lemon water from a favorite glass, use cloth napkins at dinner, or pour sparkling water into a beautiful wine glass at the end of the evening.
- Practice "love in advance" ~ Do thoughtful things for your future self: make the bed, prep the coffee for the morning, or keep a favorite snack or chocolate on hand for difficult days.
- Turn the bathroom into a mini spa ~ Roll towels neatly, organize lotions and toiletries on attractive trays, store bath salts in glass jars, incorporate natural textures like linen, ceramic, or woven baskets, and keep a cozy robe and slippers nearby.
- Romanticize your time alone ~ A comforting home is not about perfection; it's about creating an atmosphere that feels safe, soft, and lived in. The way you care for yourself within your space matters just as much as the space itself. Your home can become a quiet reminder to your nervous system: you are safe here.

Editing Your Environment: The Minimalist Way

To make room for the habits aligned with well-being mentioned above, we often need to let go – moving toward a simple, minimalist philosophy. It can be a daunting task, but thoughtful choices must sometimes be made. This allows us to make room for items that mean the most to us. In her book *The Minimalist Way*, Erica Layne reminds us, "Minimalism is the tool that helps you create space for the life you want to lead."

When we declutter our physical and mental work spaces, we see three immediate benefits:

- **Reclaimed Mental Energy:** Every object or commitment we own is a "silent to-do list." Clearing the clutter ends the constant cycle of decision fatigue.
- **Space for the "New":** You cannot build a new craft in a cluttered workshop. Decluttering creates the "white space" needed for a Growth Mindset to take root.
- **Alignment:** It forces us to ask: "Does this serve the person I am becoming, or the person I used to be?"

