



Caring for ourselves

October 2020

With the 2020-2021 school year well under way amidst the cloud of COVID-19 and with many of us feeling so much uncertainty and stress, it is easy to neglect our own well-being.

Here are a few guiding thoughts that might help you better manage your own well-being and avoid compassion fatigue:

1. Practice self-care

This obvious and familiar advice is well known but often isn't acted on in times of heightened stress and anxiety. As leaders, it becomes easier to focus on other's needs than your own when a crisis emerges. Leading by example and making your well-being a priority when under duress allows you to extend your selves to others. It's hard to believe there is time during this unsettling phase to be self-focused and caring. But that is exactly what we all must make the time to do. Take stock of your health and well-being before each week and prioritize areas in which you want to focus. Identify one activity you will execute that will focus on your own self-care and prioritize that focus throughout the week.

2. Establish morning and end of workday rituals

By establishing consistent 'bookends' to our day through rituals, we are setting boundaries to the work day. These bookends provide vital support and structure to our day. By pre-deciding how you want your workday to begin and then end, you develop a sense of control and consistent 'game plan' to manage the rigors of a busy professional work life. Starting your day with a consistent goal followed by activities that lead to consistent execution primes you for the day through personal discipline and focus. By doing the same at the end of the workday, you are able to create boundaries that allow you to refresh and be prepared for the following day. As the late great

basketball legend Kobe Bryant confided upon retirement, pre and post game rituals were the key secret to his success.

3. Practice compassion

Many leaders find it easier to show compassion for others than they do to themselves. Many of us are struggling to come up with answers right now to questions never faced by a modern society, let alone a public education system in BC during a pandemic. Self-compassion triggers a growth mindset and affords us a willingness to learn from our life experiences while maintaining a healthy self-esteem. Remind yourself that you are a dedicated professional educator helping your community to navigate a generational health and educational crisis. Profound, when you think about it objectively! As the Dalai Lama said, "If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion." Please take the time to acknowledge your unwavering commitment and intrinsically driven passion that leads you to being part of a collective of the best educational leaders in the world.

Please reach out to the [BCPVPA EIP Program](#) should you seek support and guidance around remaining professionally well during this challenging time.

With great respect and admiration,

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Jack's column appears in BCPVPA's eNews the first Friday of each month.