



# Nourishing your mental health

## November 2021

Now that we are into November, it's important to protect your mental health from invasive negative thoughts and behaviours that can often emerge when we become more tired, disillusioned or worn down. With many complex challenging dynamics at play right now in our society, community and public education system, it's important that we guard our thoughts and remain focused on maintaining a more balanced outlook and mindset.

Here are a few guiding thoughts that might help you better protect your mental health as we work through the month of November. Stay connected to your professional peers, as we navigate this challenging month together.

### 1. Cultivate gratitude

It can be hard to feel grateful when you are giving so much already to an unquenchable dynamic, as an educational leader during a pandemic. However, cultivating a practice of daily gratitude can help re-prioritize our thinking to be one of 'have' as opposed to 'have not.' There is great value in establishing a routine of gratitude in the morning and end of day as a means of 'book-ending' our workday with more positive thoughts and reflections. By taking a few minutes every morning to honour what we are grateful for and then doing the same at the end of the day to acknowledge what went well, we create greater grounding, more optimism and a sense of control of our demanding work lives. Try it for the month and see if you notice a difference.

### 2. Be mindful

Mindfulness has become a staple for many educational leaders in overcoming the demands and responsibilities that come with the professional territory. Bringing our attention to the moment helps us remain more positive and practical in the moment. When you find your mind wandering during the day to past or future challenges, ground yourself by taking a moment to get centered in the moment. Take stock of your surroundings, bring yourself back to the present and focus your attention to the job at hand. There remains so much uncertainty for all of us right now. Developing a practice of being more present and in the moment reduces anxiety, can lead to a more positive outlook and a greater sense of personal control. There are many apps and online platforms that offer great resources to developing a mindfulness practice. This could be a great wellness goal for those looking for something new and manageable.

### 3. Acts of kindness

It starts with being kind to ourselves. Have heart-felt compassion for yourself as you navigate your educational community through

another tough pandemic year. It's about acknowledging all the good work and effort you are putting into this most noble calling and profession. It includes recognizing how tolerant and resilient you are even while you and the system remain so heavily taxed. It speaks to you remaining the professional and reliable leader you are, in spite of the challenges we all face. Lead with compassion and follow with kindness. By committing to regular acts of kindness, we feel happier and generate a greater sense of well-being as we cultivate a community of greater care for one another. Many underestimate the value of kindness but during the most challenging times, this remains one of the easiest ways to generate a place of compassion and comradery. Looking for a November wellness goal? Try to offer three acts of kindness daily through the month as a personal wellness challenge. You might be very surprised by the results.

### 4. Guard your thoughts

Keeping a positive mindset and outlook is challenging right now. We are bombarded by negative news, social media information and significant societal conflict. It's important that we focus on what we have control of and where we put our discretionary energy. When we find ourselves committing to or recruiting negative thoughts, it's important we stop those thoughts in their tracks. Take a moment to collect yourself through a couple of deep breaths and refocus your thinking. We have a tendency when challenged to increase the amplification of our worries and perceived threats. That is, we make them bigger than they truly are. Our refocused thoughts should move towards being more realistic about the worry and developing a plan to address it where we need to. Whether it be by checking in with a colleague to assess the worry together or acknowledging you've done your best to address the situation and let it go. Mind yourself!

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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