



Transcript:

Happy Teachers Practice Self-Care

Presenter: Angela Begres
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ANN SCHENSKY: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to our webinar today-- Happy Teachers Practice Self-Care. My name is Ann Schensky, and I'll be the moderator today. Our speaker is Angela Begres. Today's webinar is brought to you by the Great Lakes ATTC, the Great Lakes PTTC, the Great Lakes MHTTC, and SAMHSA. The Great Lakes ATTC, MHTTC, and PTTC are all funded by SAMHSA. We are funded under these cooperative agreements.

The presentation today was prepared for the Great Lakes ATTC, MHTTC and PTTC under those cooperative agreements with SAMHSA. The opinions expressed in this webinar are the views of the speakers and do not reflect the official position of DHHS or SAMHSA. Just a couple housekeeping details for us today. The webinar will be recorded and available on the Great Lakes Current YouTube channel or the Great Lakes MHTTC products page. It usually takes us about a week to get those up.

There will be attendance certificates issued for this webinar. They will be emailed to you, and that may take up to two weeks. If you are having technical difficulties during the webinar, please message through the Chat section. Kristina Spannbauer or Stephanie Behlman, and they will be happy to assist you. And as always, you can follow us on social media and find out more about what the Great Lakes ATTC, MHTTC, and PTTC are doing. I'm going to turn it over to Sarah McMinn to introduce our speaker today.

SARAH MCMINN: Thank you, Ann. So Angela Begres-- thank you for joining us, Angela. She is a licensed clinical social worker who did her training at the University of Chicago where she obtained her MSW. She is an experienced trainer and presenter, contracted both independently and through various non-profits in the Chicago area, Michigan, and other areas. She has experience integrating mental health education programs into the curriculum for students and staff within the Chicago and West Cook County Public Schools.

In partnership with the National Alliance for Mental Health, Metro Suburban, Angela developed a program to help decrease student stress and implement mindfulness in classrooms. She has also worked with Chicago Family Services providing parenting education with efforts to get parents reunited with their children. Welcome, Angela, and thank you all for joining us today.



ANGELA BERGES: Good morning, everyone. So my name is Angela Begres, and I am a licensed clinical social worker, and I'm here today to talk to you all about Happy Teachers Practice Self-Care. So let me just put my slides up so it looks like a presentation-- there we go. All right. So let's talk a little bit about our learning objectives for today. So we're going to talk a little bit about, what is job burnout? We're going to define it and be able to recognize some of their warning signs, and talk a little bit about how we might reduce job burnout in the education field.

This is going to involve a brief discussion on socioemotional learning. We're also going to connect some of this information with virtual environment, considering the fact that many of you are potentially doing classes virtually right now, so we're going to talk a bit about how we can maintain our social connection in a virtual environment. And then we're going to start talking a little bit more in depth about self-care by talking about setting boundaries and talking about self-compassion, and we're going to end this presentation by, together, creating a self-care plan.

So let's start talking a little bit more about health care. You might have seen this picture before you've ever gotten on a plane. So it's really important for us to secure our own masks first before we assist children. We can't be there in a full capacity to teach kids if we're not in a full capacity ourselves. Especially in today's environment of coronavirus and school closures, it is critical for you as school leaders and educators to focus on your own socioemotional well-being as we look to support the socioemotional development of students at home.

So both ourselves as well as our students are living in a different environment currently. So how can we protect our self-care as well as support our youth? Here's some more information. Self-care care is not selfish. Happy teachers lead to happy students. So we are the socioemotional role model in our classroom-- humans learn through example. When you come into the classroom, you set the stage for how students interact with each other.

Being able to keep your cool in emotionally heightened situations on a consistent basis is the difference between your students learning how to work together or triggering one another. Student achievement increases in calm classrooms. It is in a calm, consistent environment that they feel safe and make greater academic gains. That calm consistency starts with us and having your own self-care regimen allowing you to stay consistent all year long. So as teachers, we also want to make sure that we can maintain our self-care throughout the school year.

That leads to sustainability and stability. Make sure to do small things to take care of yourself every day in order to maintain stability over a long period of time. So let's focus more on job burnout, and how to spot it and act. So job burnout is a special type of job stress-- a state of physical, emotional, or mental exhaustion combined with doubts about your competence and the value of your work. In a Canada study released in 2018, they found a possible



connection between teachers burnout level and student level of cortisol, a hormone that is released during stress.

When teachers were feeling burned out or exhausted, students felt more stress. So when we're feeling stress or burnout with us, we're bringing these into our classrooms. Teacher burnout is almost epidemic in the country, and it is one of the causes of the 70% annual attrition rate among educators. Furthermore, approximately one third of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years, and one out of 83 teachers go on sick leave each year due to pressures at work that lead to anxiety and stress.

Science have found that teachers can burn out from the negative emotions and inefficiency they feel around challenges of managing their students. We know that oftentimes in the classroom, we may feel alone in some of those challenges and those stresses that some of the students might bring them into the classroom. So I want to run a quick poll, and this is just to help us assess ourselves, whether we are experiencing any levels of job burnout. I'm going to ask for us to launch a poll, and I want you all to answer these questions.

Whether you have felt this, do you feel these rarely, sometimes, or often in the last year. There's a couple questions. Cue me in when they're all done. If you're having any difficulty with the poll, you put it in the Chat so we are aware of that.

All right. So here are some of the answers that you all submitted regarding the poll, and so I just want to show you the questions and talk a little bit about each of them one by one. And again, this is not in clinical assessment-- this is just for your knowledge, and it's just for us to start thinking about what is job burnout, and maybe how it might feel for us. So the first question we ask was, have you become cynical or critical at work? What does that mean-- what does it mean to be cynical or critical at work?

Sometimes that might mean things that you oftentimes let go, things that you would look at in a more positive way, all of a sudden, they're becoming a barrier or something that you no longer can accept, or oftentimes bothers you while you're at work. Because of some of the answers that we got here, we got a 44% of sometimes and a 25% of often. So sometimes, you might feel critical at work but not all the time. The next question is, do you drag yourself to work and have trouble getting started once you arrive?

And I'm curious to see how that might look like for all of you who are doing this virtually, right? When we think about job burnout and we think about this question-- do you drag yourself to work and have trouble getting started once you arrive-- we think about this question of job burnout and really think about, are you excited to go to work? Are you looking forward to interacting with students every day, or is this now becoming more of a drag or something that is very difficult for you each day?



And so some of the answers that we got were rarely. 38% chose rarely. Sometimes-- 44% of you have put sometimes and 19% put often. The third question is, have you become irritated with your co-workers? Again, when thinking about job burnout, these are some warning signs-- so we like to come to work do we like to interact with our peers, and then we think about maybe possibly we are experiencing some level of job burnout might look like as not wanting to interact with our co-workers or maybe withdrawing from our co-workers.

And so that can be another indicator of job burnout, and some of these efforts were rarely, at 44%, sometimes 38%, often at 19%. Then we have, do you lack the energy to be consistently productive, right? You might see this often when you're doing any other assessment, but again, when we're thinking about that burnout, we are no longer having the same energy that we have when we first started our career in education, and that can be an indicator of potential job burnout.

Here we had rarely at 44%, sometimes at 38%, often at 19%. Do you lack satisfaction from your achievements? This is one that oftentimes could be a good indicator of how we're feeling towards our career. Do you lack satisfaction from your achievements? Are we seeing any growth with students? Are we seeing any growth in ourselves? That can also be a potential warning sign or something to keep in mind when we think about, are we experiencing job burnout?

Do you feel disillusioned about your job? Again, when we're thinking about job burnout, how are we feeling about our job? Do we see a positive outcome of what we do each day? Do we see a positive outcome in our overall year with students, or are we feeling negative about that? Or are we feeling not successful within that work that we're doing each day? Question number seven-- it was, are you using food drugs or alcohol to feel better or to simply not feel? Sorry.

So we have rarely at 44% and sometimes at 56%. One thing that, when I was preparing for this presentation, I read that oftentimes individual who sometimes feel burnout from their job, they oftentimes start increasing the use of drugs or alcohol-- and with teachers, what research has shown is that they actually might also start increasing their use of other medication to support them, such as medication for anxiety, and so this is something that research has shown a trend of, in increasing use of alcohol or drugs or other medications as well.

Have your sleep habits or appetite changed? Again, we see a high number here at sometimes 63%. So have your sleep habits or appetite has changed? When we think of our overall well-being, we want to make sure that, for our mental health and for us to feel well, we want to make sure that we're sleeping well and we're eating healthy. We're going to talk a lot about that when we start talking a bit more about our self-care plan, and how sleeping is



going to improve how we feel about our self, and even sometimes it can improve how we feel about our relationship and about our career.

Are you troubled by unexplained headaches, backaches, or physical complaints? And again, this is now the last question here in this very brief assessment. This is used to help us think about, what is our level of burnout? And one thing I want to make clear about this assessment-- and it was really just for you to see where you fall in that spectrum of burnout-- but one thing I want to make sure that I emphasize is that there's a brief assessment. It's not something that is clinical, but if you are experiencing high levels, if you are some of these individuals that put sometimes or often, this is something that might require for you to consult with a doctor or a mental health provider.

And some of these symptoms can also be indicators of other health conditions. So again, we're talking about what might burnout look like and feel like, but these can also be symptoms of other things, like depression or other physical illnesses. So keeping that in mind when you go through this assessment, and when you think about how you answer this question. So what causes that burnout? So there's a lot of reasons why people might experience job burnout, especially in the education field. We're oftentimes putting in so much of our energy and so much of our time, and when we don't feel like we're getting any of that back, we might slowly start feeling burnt out from that job, in terms from all of the energy that we've put out.

So with education, we see workload can lead to job burnout, right? Having so much work that you need to bring it home, or that you're using your summer break or your spring break to do work. So workload oftentimes can cause burnout. I've already talked about not getting enough sleep. Not getting enough sleep can lead to a lot of other things, physical, emotional, but it can also lead to job burnout. No work-life balance. If your life takes up so much of your time and effort that you don't have the energy to spend time with your family and friends, you may burn out quickly.

And then all of these other ones are really important as well, right? Are we not getting enough feedback? Are we not getting enough coaching? A lot of us go to school-- we get a lot of information, but then, after the first two, three years of being in the field, it is really important to continue to educate ourselves and continue to get some more coaching and support. No meaning-- are we losing the meaning of why we started this field in the first place? And one that's really important right now is recognition-- are we getting no recognition for the work that we're doing?

We gain the recognition from our supervisors from our colleagues from our peers, and so when we think about how can we fight job burnout. We're going to talk about how we can all support each other in that process, because job burnout is something that's very likely in a field where we're giving a lot of support, like teaching, doctors, social workers. A lot of the times, those fields



lead to job burnout because of all of our energy put into those careers. So how might we fight job burnout?

So create an emergency escape route-- assess your interests, your skills, and passions. An honest assessment can help you decide whether you should consider an alternative job, which is one that is less demanding or one that better matches your interests or core values. Another way that we can create an emergency escape route is to get some exercise. Regular physical activity can help you be better at dealing with stress. It can also help you get your own mind of work and focus on something else.

So finding time to do some physical exercise. And again, I mean we emphasize this-- get some sleep. The next thing we can do is design a supportive environment. So seek support-- oftentimes when we seek support, we might seek support in a way where we're nagging or criticizing, so it's really important to find some helpful support where we're learning and growing. So whether you reach out to your co-workers, friends, or loved ones, support and collaboration might help you cope with job stress and feelings of burnout.

It's really important to feel that we're getting some support from people around us. Eliminate drain-- manage the stressors that contribute to job burnout. Once you've identified what's fueling your feelings of job burnout, you can make a plan to address that issue. So if we go back to the slide where we did that brief assessment-- from those questions, which of them resonated with you more? And those are some of the things that you might be able to pick up now and say, OK, I might want to evaluate it a bit more.

I might want to create a plan on how I might address some of your challenges. I might want to talk to someone about what I'm experiencing. So that's how we can eliminate some of those drains. The next point here says, uncover your job values. So this could be adjusting your attitude. If you've become cynical at work, consider ways to improve your outlook-- rediscovering joyful aspects of work, which might mean looking into small things every day. Which student were you able to really connect with today?

Were you able to take some breaks during the day and do something for yourself? So really starting to shift your aspect and finding some places where you can connect again with the things that you really, really value about your work. I think one thing I want to ask you to do is, use your vacation time, use your summer time, use your spring break for things that you enjoy and things that refill you, because when you are in the classroom and you're working with every day, that can be really, really draining, and you need some space to recharge and re-motivate yourself.

And so it's really important when you do, going in those breaks, to have a plan on how you're going to use them to refuel yourself. And define your success, right? What is success for you? And make some goals around that. What will



success look like for me next school year, and how am I going to create some plan to achieve that success? So we may want to re-evaluate this each year when we're starting our classrooms. We might want to re-evaluate our success at the end of the school year and think about what, were some things we did that were successful this year, and maybe areas where we can grow?

Some of those teachers, educators, and professionals were always finding places to grow. And that can also improve our self care. So let's talk a little bit about socioemotional learning. I'm sure for all of you who are teachers and educators here, you have seen these in the past. There are some competencies that oftentimes need to be included in some of your teacher plans. But what we have learned, and what research has shown us is that, in order for us to be successful at implementing this in the classroom, as educators, we need to understand what they are and also implement them in ourselves.

So socioemotional learning is the process of developing and using skills, attitudes, and knowledge that help youth and adults identify regular emotions, develop positive relationships, and make reasonable decisions. So a recent report looking at the landscape of teacher preparation programs and socioemotional learning notes that in only one state, which is Alaska, more than half of teacher education programs address self-management skills, which include managing stress.

So what it is saying is that oftentimes, when we're going to school to become an educator, those programs are not really addressing some of these socioemotional learning in our own education. Very few programs overall teach how to identify their own feelings, strengths, and weaknesses, or how to control and express their feelings. Having these skills can help teachers stay in the profession longer. So what we're saying is that we want to be able as educators to be able to learn how to identify our feelings, how to identify our strengths and also recognize our weaknesses.

If we're able to do this, this can increase the likelihood of us being in this field a little bit longer. I said this in the beginning, but about 8% of teachers in the classroom each year. The turnover is much higher for new teachers and teachers who work in high poverty schools-- again, because many of these components imply on how we relate to students, but also how students come into our classrooms. So these are the five socioemotional components-- self-management, self-awareness, reasonable decision making, relationships skill, social awareness.

So you might be teaching these to your students each day, but what I'm trying to say, we want to be able to manage these five socioemotional competencies within ourselves as educators, as well. So the best teachers are learners, then role models for these skills, for the skills they want to see in their students. Social and emotional learning is most productive when all teachers are invested in the program. With socioemotional learning, students not only



experience less anxiety, less hyperactivity, and less aggression-- they're generally happier and more attentive too.

The impact on teachers is no less profound. Teachers report that socioemotional learning contributes to their own feelings of happiness and helps them be more organized and responsive. So again, these components are critical for us to teach in the classroom, but they're also so important for us to know how to utilize ourselves. And I would be curious to hear from all of you, how many of you have used these competencies, have learned about them in your school, or even how you've implemented these in the classroom.

So here's how we might be able to start setting a positive tone in the classroom. And again, right? In order for us to feel positive about ourselves and positive about our career, we are the role models of that. So how can we provide this in a classroom when we're trying to bring a positive outlook for students? So first thing we do is we want to set the tone from day one, right? We want to come in to the beginning of the year with a positive outlook. We also want to create a safe space for all students.

We can do this by telling students it's a requirement that, once they set their feet into your classroom, they are to leave all parts of stereotypes or prejudice out the door. Explain that, in your classroom, it's important that everyone feel safe and accepted for who they are. By implementing this plan of classroom management, it will set a positive tone for the rest of the school year. So the earlier we set this tone, the more positive the outlook can be. We also want to create an atmosphere that would make it possible for students to-- impossible for students to feel negative.

So display positive quotes and methods around the room so the students are surrounded by optimism. Create lessons and activities that incorporate positive messaging. So this might not only be useful for your students-- it can also be useful for yourself when you walk into your classroom in the morning, or when you're having a tough day, just being able to see some of these positive messages around your classroom. Make personal connections-- and I think these are some reminders-- I'm positive that most of you already implement this in your classroom.

So make a personal connection with students. One way to set a positive tone in your classroom is to create a personal relationship with each one of your students, and this might include having an icebreaker at the beginning of the school year where you get to know a little bit more about each of your students and something about their personal life. This not only builds a connection between you and your students, but also helps you assess whether some of your students might need other support.

And the last one is, make discipline about accountability. Often, we focus on what students are doing wrong and punish them without giving the students the opportunity to reflect in their behavior. Give students time to cool off and



think about what they have done, and then take that time to calmly discuss how they could have-- how they could have gone about the situation in a more positive way. So again, this is just about teaching students solving problems skills.

Honestly, I've worked a lot with students recently, and I see how they are having to utilize solving problems in these virtual environment, because their daily routine looks much differently now than when it looked like when they were in the classroom. And that might include having to figure out how to use technology, having to figure out how to create-- work through some of their handouts on their own, or how to answer some of the difficult math questions, work through some of the difficult math questions on their own.

So I've seen students currently really utilizing some of those solving problem skills, and I've seen how teachers are being really creative in how they support students in this virtual world as well. And so that's something to keep in mind that currently, how classrooms look-- very different than how they looked at the beginning of this year, and they might be very different in how they're going to look at the beginning of next year. So thinking about how we might implement a positive tone in our classrooms virtually, or in different settings as well.

So this slide goes on from what I was saying-- how can we continue to create some social connection with students despite being in a remote environment or living in a virtual world? So students are very-- students and kids really feel the need to have a routine, and they crave structure and order. So during times of uncertainty, sticking to routines can help kids feel less anxious and worried. As much as possible, try to keep your classroom routine intact when teaching remotely.

That might look like making sure that, if you're meeting with students, you're meeting at the same time each week, right? Or [INAUDIBLE] teachers at you're able to find a way to connect with students each week so that you're still keeping some level of routine, and students know what to expect and how they're going to be contacting your meeting with you. Set guidelines and have high expectations. We're all still learning how to adapt to remote teaching and learning, but that doesn't mean that we have to let our expectations fall.

You know your students best, and you know the kind of work they're capable of. This is also an opportunity to develop problem solving steps-- I've talked about this already-- being mindful of that, and I know that maybe grading is looking very differently right now, and how we are providing scores and how we're providing tests, or how we're assessing how kids are learning, but we still want to maintain high expectations of our students so that they feel motivated to continue to learn.

Encourage connectedness-- stay in touch. Most students want to hear from you. Believe it or not, your students actually miss you. So find ways that you



can connect with them, and you probably are doing this already-- I'm very curious on how you're staying connected with your students currently, and how that looks like. I'm sure some of your peers might also want to know what that looks like. How can we stay connected with our students, despite the distance. That may be just an email saying hi, or providing specific feedback on assignments.

And by providing specific feedback, that may be providing individual feedback about assignments. So anything that you can do to stay connected with students-- scheduling videoconferencing with your students if they're struggling with a subject or an area. Those things can be really encouraging for a lot of your students. And prioritize-- you may not cover everything you hope to cover this year, which I'm sure all of you are feeling really overwhelmed because this year is not ending the way you anticipated that it was going to end.

But it's really important to prioritize that, and to remind yourself that it's OK that you might not be able to cover all of that information. But maybe you can focus on the most important things that you hope to get out of this year. So this is also just practicing some self-care for yourself and just reminding yourself, you know what? I'm doing the best I can. This is outside of my hands-- let me do the best I can in these circumstances. And lastly, I think this is something you all know, and probably have heard a lot about, but practice online safety, and really model that for your students as well if you're meeting with them virtually.

We are going to start talking more in depth about self-care. And I found this quote-- I really think it was really powerful for me. We need to do a better job of putting ourselves at the top of our own to-do list, and this is a quote from Michelle Obama. So as individuals who work in a education field, we oftentimes put ourselves, our self, our mental health, and even our physical health at the end of our to-do list, and we want to start moving that to the very, very top of that to-do list.

So before we talk a little bit about more specific what is self-care, right? I want to talk about this concept of self-compassion, and this was created by a researcher called Kristin Neff, and she defined self-compassion as having compassion for your self when you're having a difficult time or notice something you do not like about yourself in the same way you would have compassion for others. So being an educator means that, in general, we have a lot of compassion for other people.

But do you have the same amount of compassion for yourself? With the burnout issue teachers face, taking care of themselves through the work-life balance is important, but it's not enough-- you oftentimes hear, are you taking care of yourself? Are you taking care of yourself? What's your self-care plan? I think it's really important for us to also practice self-compassion and understand that we do work in a stressful environment, and we want to



practice self-care compassion towards ourselves, just like we would practice compassion to our colleagues, to our friends, and to our loved ones.

So this concept of self-care has three components, and I think it's a really, really powerful-- when I was first working through and I learned this, and I found this research, it really impacted me, because I've oftentimes talked a lot of self-care, self-care, self-care. But if we're not being compassionate towards ourselves, any level of self-care can fall down the drain. So the three components of self-compassion is self kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. So before we talk about this component, I do want to focus on some things that are not self-compassion.

I want to make sure we have a good definition of what is and what isn't self-compassion. So self-pity isn't the same as self-compassion. When people feel self-pity, they become immersed in their problems and forget that others have problems too, feeling like they're the only ones who are suffering. In essence, they forget their humanity, that they are interconnected in having a similar experience with others. So self compassion is really the concept of feeling interconnected and having similar experiences that other people do.

Self-compassion also isn't self-indulgence. Sometimes people say that they don't want to be self-compassionate because they're afraid that they will let themselves get away with anything, like saying, I'm stressed out today, so I'm going to go sit here and watch TV all day and eat a quart of ice cream. There's nothing wrong with doing that, but that is not self-compassion. Self-compassion is wanting to be happy and healthy, and just giving oneself pleasure-- and it's not just giving oneself pleasure.

But caring self-compassion provides a powerful force for growth and change. So yes, is it OK to self-indulge, absolutely-- but that's not what self-compassion really is. And self-compassion also isn't self esteem. Self esteem is a person's sense of self-worth, perceived value, or how much they like themselves. Research has shown that, in comparison to self esteem, self-compassion is associated more accurate with self-concept, greater emotional resilience, and more caring relationships.

So again, the concept of self compassion is feeling like we're part of something greater, feeling like we share something with the rest of humanity. So the first concept is self-kindness. So we think about self-kindness-- this means being understanding towards yourself when you suffer, fail, or feel inadequate rather than ignoring your pain or beating yourself up with self-criticism. So oftentimes, if you had a rough day at work, if you had a rough day virtually, you might provide some negative self talk to yourself, like I should have been more prepared, or I must have hurt that staff, student's feelings.

And self-kindness will look something like this-- it's telling yourself, I am sorry you had a rough day. Even though you may have said something to a student



you wish you hadn't, it's OK. All teachers do that occasionally. But the student survived, and so will you-- I know you care so much about your students and want them to be successful. Teaching is one of the most challenging jobs out there, and you're doing the best you can. So practicing this kindness that you will practice towards others towards yourself.

Sometimes that might mean catching yourself when you're self criticizing and shifting those statements to some that are kind, and some that will reflect how you might respond to someone you care, that are carrying the same feelings that you are feeling. The second concept of self-compassion is common humanity, and this is explained on its own, right? It's helpful to remember that we're all in this together, and everyone must deal with the challenges of life.

So it is knowing that you're not alone in those feelings and in those experiences, and that a lot of your peers and colleagues might have experienced some of those challenges. Because of this, common humanity is also knowing that you have other people in your community that you can go to for support and for guidance, and not letting those go, and being able to find and identify who is someone that I can relate to, that I feel comfortable with, that I can share some of these feelings, and that they can support me through that.

So the idea of common humanity is that we're here together, we might all have experience when we're looking emotions and feelings at some point in our life. And the last component is mindfulness-- I know that mindfulness is a very important process right now. A lot of people really encourage mindfulness, and there's a lot, a lot of research on how mindfulness is useful in the classroom, useful for students, but mindfulness is also really important for us as educators.

So mindfulness is the moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts and feelings. Research has suggested that teachers who practice mindfulness are less likely to experience negative emotions and depression, and more likely to enjoy a positive state of mind. Now when we think about mindfulness, we have to be conscious of this-- mindfulness is not a thing that you're going to practice when you're really stressed or when you're feeling really anxious. The best way to practice mindfulness is to incorporate it in your daily routine.

And once it becomes part of your daily routine, that concept takes action when you're feeling anxious or stressed, and so I highly encourage you to think about, how might you practice mindfulness daily, and how might you incorporate this into your daily routine so that when you are really, really stressed or really, really struggling, those tools can become active in those moments. And so mindfulness can be a really simple process. There is a lot of different ways in which you can practice mindfulness, but they don't have to be these very long processes or these very long tools, right?



It could be something as simple as one minute breathing. So I want you all to look at this video I have for you, and what the goal here is is how we inhale and exhale, and there's a lot of research about how-- where we inhale oxygen into our brain, it create these-- it changes some of the chemical of our brain that oftentimes lead to stress and anxiety, and oftentimes that can be released through that exhale. So even practicing mindful breathing can change the levels of stress in your brain.

And so again, really, really helpful to this practice is, a couple times during your day, a couple times before you come into a classroom, after you're driving into the school, before you sit and have a virtual conversation with some of your students, is finding a place where you can sit with yourself and just practice some mindful breathing-- can be really useful. So I'm going to play this for you. I want us all to maybe do this together. What you're going to see is square again I'll run it once, and I'll walk you through it.

You're going to see a bubble open up. As it opens up, I want you to inhale, and when it closes, exhale. Well, let's do it together. Inhale. Exhale. One more time-- inhale. Exhale. And the whole goal here is, again, to find a place to catch your breath, to relieve some of the negative cortisol in your brain, and to really think in a more clear manner, and mindful breathing is just one of many other techniques available for us to practice mindfulness.

And currently there are so many resources available for individuals that want to practice mindfulness on a daily routine. We can also practice mindfulness or do something like this four-square breathing when we first start a session with our students, just to maybe connect or set a routine. Just start your session by saying, hey, so great to see you today. Can we just do a minute of mindful breathing before we start our session today, or before we start our work today? That can really set you all up in the same space to really concentrate on what's going to be happening during the remaining of your session or your course.

So I've outlined here seven self-care strategies for teachers. This is very specific for teachers because it really incorporates how we might be able to utilize health care through our day, through our school days, throughout the year, and even again, I want to re-emphasize, how can we utilize self-care while we're in those breaks, whether it is summer break, spring break, winter break. The most important part of self-care is to set healthy boundaries. As a therapist myself, I have struggled with that often.

We have the tendency to care a lot for other people, and we make ourselves available, often trashing ourselves a lot more than we can. And so, really important for you to set healthy boundaries from the beginning, from the get-go, with your students. Sometimes this might mean setting healthy boundaries for your students' parents as well, especially during virtual sessions, because that can be distracting and also challenging. Take breaks often-- this may be easier said than done, right?



When you're in a classroom, you might have eight classes, one after the other, and only maybe a 15-minute break. But as much as you can, take a break. Try to do some of this mindful breathing. Eat something you like. Maybe sit down and do something that's completely unrelated to your teaching for the day, right? If you escape for a few minutes and send a text message to someone you care, or do something that really distracts you. So those breaks are really, really important.

I talked about exercising, and sometimes I like to emphasize that exercise does not mean doing a 90-minute workout routine, or a 60-minute workout routine. Exercise can be walking for a few minutes, going around your school if the weather allows it. Stretching in your chair. So exercise can be many different things. I know some research has said that just walking 30 minutes a week can improve your mental health. As well, sometimes when we are trying to implement something new into our routine, we might hold back because we've got to take a lot of effort.

So I want you to make-- I want you to know that exercise is not this very big event. It can be something really small. And know your own threshold for stress. Right? Maybe the threshold for stress is Friday-- you have had a very long week, and Friday is just the most stressful day for you every week. So what are some things that you can do on Fridays that can reduce that stress? So this is part of also getting to know yourself. What are some things that trigger you? What are some things that impact you?

And being able to create a plan to support you in those situations. That's also why mindfulness can be really helpful, because if we start incorporating mindfulness in our daily routine, then those tools kick in when you're feeling your most stressed. Find at least three activities that relieve stress for you. I would like to add here, find at least three activities that are healthy to relieve stress for you. For some, that can be talking to your coworkers about some of your stress.

For others, that might be doing activities that are fully, completely outside of your work, right? Going for a hike. Baking cookies. Spending time with the kids, right? Maybe sewing or knitting or reading a book. So what are some things that really help relieve stress, and implementing that, right? Giving yourself 10 minutes a day to do some of that, or 20 minutes a day, or maybe three hours one day of the week. But finding the time in your life and in your routine to be able to include those activities.

And sometimes these might start by you being really mindful and active on adding those activities into your routine. But once you start adding those into your routine, they start becoming part of your daily routine. And so again, keeping that in mind. Start your day on a positive note. What are some things that help you feel positive? Remember earlier, we talked about how can we use this in the classroom, putting positive messages around your classroom? This can be something we can do at home, right?



This might be listening to a positive podcast. This might be listening to some music that helps you feel positive about your day, right? So it's going to be the whole concept of pumping yourself up for the day, so that your mindset into making this a positive day, as opposed to being lingering on some of those things that are stressful or negative, or some of the things that you're going to stress the routine of your day.

And lastly, you want to find a time to connect with others. When we're connecting with others, we might be connecting co-worker we might be connected with our friends and our family. I think this goes back to when we talked about some tools that increases burnout, right? Not having feedback, not having support, not having coaching. How might we connect with others and improve those skills? So when we connect with others who might be experts in the field that can help us learn tools that we-- additional tools that can be helpful in that classroom.

How do we consult with other professionals in areas that we're having difficulty? So this is equally as important for us to grow as well as for us to connect with people and family members, and loved ones. So what we're going to talk a bit about our self-care plan. Before we do that, I'm going to ask if we can launch our second and last poll. This is just to get you thinking about, what do you currently do for self-care? This is going to ask a couple of questions, and you get to choose what you do, and you can choose multiple answers as well.

All right. So the poll has been closed. So let's look at this-- I want you all to do it. Also, if you have paper and a pen, or anything to write with, or you can open a Word document-- I want you to think about this with me as well. So you know there's a lot of there's a couple of different aspects that we want to include when we're creating a health care plan. So we want to make sure that we move some physical activities, right? We want to involve our physical selves when we're creating a physical self-care plan.

So activities that help you stay fit and healthy, and using that energy to get through your work and personal commitment. You might think that sometimes physical activity is just walking or doing exercises, but sometimes it can involve sleeping, hydration-- right? Going to your doctor's yearly routine, right? So part of your self-care plan is going to always involve taking care of your physical self as well. Remember, that's what I said earlier-- putting yourself on the top of the to-do list.

Sometimes, when our days are really busy, and the year keeps going, we forget to go to the doctor and get our self checked, and so keeping that in mind as part of our self-care plan. Psychological, right? So that may be activities that help you feel clearheaded and able to engage with the professional challenges that are found in your work and personal life. So again, psychological can be a lot of different things-- when we think about,



what some of the psychological things can be, and keep a reflective journal, right?

How did my day go today? How did my year go? How have I been feeling, right? So keeping a journal can be really helpful. If we can engage in external supervision-- I've talked about that before. Engage with a non-work hobby. Finding hobbies can be helpful for your self-care plan, but also a way that we can start even planning for retirement, right? We work for so many years, and sometimes work becomes our life, and when it becomes time to retire, we find ourselves at a loss of things to do.

And so creating a hobby and starting on exploring, what are some of your hobbies and things that you really enjoy outside of your work can change how you view life, but also can help you plan for retirement. Make time for relaxation. Right? Go out. Enjoy the sun. Be sitting in the pool. And get a massage. Relax. Do whatever that helps to feel relaxed. And always make time to engage with positive friends and family, right? You might notice I emphasize the concept of positive friends and family, people that help you feel better and successful and good about yourself.

The next concept of self-care, and when we're thinking about creating your self-care plan, you want to include something that supports our emotions, right? So you have to involve emotional self-care. So allow yourself to safely experience your full range of emotions. None of us-- most of us probably weren't raised in an environment where we can already talk about how we're feeling, or how sometimes people hurt our feelings, or how we feel angry or upset or sad, and so it takes conscience to be able to start working on your emotions and start naming how you're feeling.

And we want to be strict to our students, but before we can teach that to our students, we want to be able to practice that ourselves. So allow yourself to safely experience your full range of emotions. If you're feeling angry, allow yourself to feel that. By that, I'm not saying, allow yourself to express anger, but just allow yourself to experience that you're feeling angry and frustration, right? This past couple of months have been hard, and things in our society right now are looking pretty bad, and we want to be able to allow ourselves to experience that, and process those feelings because you're going to have students coming to you for answers and for support.

And so important, especially in our current situation and current environment, that we connect with those feelings and allow ourselves to feel that. It may also mean that when we're thinking about our emotional health care, it may mean doing things that you really haven't done in a long time, as well as even thinking about things that went good for you, right? So it could be, write three good things that you did each day, where your stress will be at school or work, you may not have time to really evaluate, what were some of the positive things I did today?



Where did things really go well today? So if you're able to write-- that's the concept of a gratitude journal-- if you're able to identify, despite some of these challenges today, I'm successful at everything I was hoping to get answered. But here are three things that I'm proud of what happened today, or three things that I did well today, or three things that I accomplished today. It can also be helpful to maintain a good social group, at work but also outside of work.

We think about self-care also as spirituality, is a very important part of that, right? So I'm thinking about how I engage with my spirituality, and that might mean engaging and reflecting in meditation. That might mean going to church, mosque, temple. That can be-- that can include doing yoga. That can include practicing mindfulness. So spiritual-- there's not one specific way in which we practice spirituality, but finding one way that we can add that to our to-do list each day or each week.

And lastly, our relationships, right? Oftentimes-- we talked about it earlier-- having a good work-life balance. How do we maintain healthy relationships? And think about, am I putting enough energy in those relationships that really matter to me, with my partners, with my children, with my friendships? Am I spending way too much time trying to do my job, or spending too many hours focusing on work? Because in order to take care of others, we need to take care of ourselves, and be able to connect with those relationships that matter to us as well.

So that's a really, really important part of our self-care plan. So again, I encourage you to think about these different concepts and different aspects, and really spend some time to think about how you create your own self-care plan, including all of these concepts in that self-care plan. All right. And then my last slide here is, how do we practice health care during coronavirus? And for some states, coronavirus is not impacting you as much right now. For others, like Michigan, we're still not able to go out or go to a restaurant, or we're kind of pretty restricted, so it can impact people very differently.

We also know that for some, it may just be something that others are experiencing; whereas for others, it might be something that they have lived and have experienced some loss. So really important to think about how we might practice health care for ourselves and also, how might we support others? So we talked about setting boundaries. I don't want to go too much in depth with that. I think it's really mindful when you are supporting your peers or students, that you do set some boundaries about what the schedule looks like, what your routine would look like, when your day starts, and when your day ends.

Especially working from home-- I don't know about all of you, but for me, those lines have become really blurry. I sometimes work much later than what I would work if I was in an office. So it's even setting some boundaries for yourself. So that might be keeping mind or telling yourself when [INAUDIBLE]



is, right? You might write somewhere, when you stand again, then I'm going to take a five-minute break. And post it somewhere that you can see it, so you are mindful that you're going to put in some of your breaks, that you're going to be able to have time to go and take care of yourself.

[INAUDIBLE] eating lunch and dinner, and you're eating healthy meals, because while we're working from home, and sometimes that has some comfort. It can also bring a lot of challenges. Reflect on your feelings and needs, right? Spend some time reflecting on what you're feeling and what you need. So for example, you might say, I'm feeling overwhelmed because there's a lot of new information about my curriculum, and how it will change. I need a five-minute break. I need a five-minute break.

Then you might write down questions that come up and help you center. So again, reflecting on what are your needs right now, and then, how might you move forward with those needs? Take breaks between that. Allow yourself to under [AUDIO OUT] things are uncertain, and we might not have the answers for everything, and that's OK. That goes into recognizing what is and what isn't in your control, right? So acknowledging that there's just a lot of things today, and we don't have control through.

And saying this is within my control-- it is within my control that I'm going to provide support for my students. It is not in my control to give students answers on when we're all going to go back to school, or when this stay-at-home is going to end, right? So what is and what isn't in your control, and acknowledge that. And it's OK to say I don't have an answer for that, or I don't know what that's going to look like. Acknowledge moments of gratitude or joy-- reinforce that. Spend some time thinking about, what am I grateful for? Where did I find joy?

And use self-care routines throughout your day. So you might start your day with some meditation. You might start your day with exercise. So it's really important just to find ways, small ways, to take care of yourself throughout your day. If we start incorporating some of these self-care routines through our days, they start becoming our routine. All right. That's it for my presentation. So I am open for questions and answers.

ANN SCHENSKY: Thank you so much, Angela. That was really, really good information, and a lot of self-affirming that it's OK sometimes to be stressed out, and how we handle it. If people have self-care routines that seem to be working for them, and you're comfortable sharing them, you can either put them in the Chat or the Q&A section-- whichever works better for you. We've gotten a couple-- people are reading new books or working on projects, some art projects.

Taking walks with their pets. Other things-- just making sure, I think, that the point that you make, Angela, about exercise, and it being something as simple as walking around the block, or giving yourself a couple of minutes to literally



go to the mailbox. So just things like that that-- it doesn't have to be-- you don't have to go to the gym, you don't have to have equipment, you don't have to change your clothes, and all those other things-- I think is just really a good way for people to just break the pattern.

Because when we do work from home, we never really leave work. So that's important. Some people are saying go to the park and have a picnic, do some tai chi. These are all really awesome suggestions. And also, just to clarify too, in case other people had the question-- all of the slides and the presentation will be available on our website and our YouTube channel, and so it usually takes us about a week to make sure that we have everything, so you can just check on the Great Lakes MHTTC web page.

And you'll be able to see not only this presentation, but other presentations as well. So, do other people have questions, or want to weigh in? We would love to hear from you. Otherwise, I would really like to thank you all for attending today, and especially thank Angela for her fantastic presentation.

ANGELA BERGES: Thank you.

ANN SCHENSKY: Thank you all, and we'll talk to you later.