MINDFULNESS TOOLS TO PREVENT BURNOUT:
FOSTERING TEACHERS' SOCIAL AND
EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

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Teaching = Cognitive + Emotional Demands
TEACHER STRESS – A GROWING PROBLEM

• 50% report regular, excessive stress

• 40% leave teaching in first 5 years

• Attrition from stress & heavy workloads, not salary
**Emotional labor**

Feeling you must suppress your emotions daily (e.g. by keeping a smile on) when your personal values don’t match up with work expectations (e.g. wanting more time to support every student but needing to meet curriculum demands)

**Compassion fatigue**

Feeling helpless when constantly exposed to students who you can’t help and who are suffering (e.g. from poverty, homelessness, racism, violence)

**Burnout**

High work-related stress piled up over months or years including mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion that leads to not being able to cope with demands (e.g. from parents, students, policies, curriculum)
TEACHER STRESS – THE BURNOUT CASCADE

Deteriorating Classroom Climate

Student Misbehavior

Emotional Exhaustion

Callousness

(Greenberg & Jennings, 2009)
SEL is...

The process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.
SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

- Perspective-taking
- Empathy
- Appreciating diversity
- Respect for others
- Impulse control
- Stress management
- Self-discipline
- Self-motivation
- Perseverance
- Goal-setting
- Organizational skills

- Identifying emotions
- Self-perception/Identity
- Recognizing strengths
- Sense of self-confidence
- Self-efficacy

- Identifying problems
- Analyzing situations
- Solving problems
- Evaluating
- Reflecting
- Ethical responsibility

- Social engagement
- Building relationships
- Working cooperatively
- Resolving conflicts
- Helping/Seeking help

- Social awareness
  - Managing emotions and behaviors to achieve one's goals
  - Recognizing one's emotions and values as well as one's strengths and challenges
  
- Relationship skills
  - Forming positive relationships, working in teams, dealing effectively with conflict

- Responsible decision-making
  - Making ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behavior
TEACHER SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL WELLBEING CAN IMPACT STUDENTS

School/Community Context Factors

Healthy Teacher/Student Relationships

Healthy Classroom Climate

Effective SEL implementation

Effective classroom management skills

Teachers Social & Emotional Skills & Well Being

Student Social, emotional & academic outcomes

Jennings & Greenberg (2009)
Teachers who possess social and emotional competencies are **more likely to stay in the classroom longer** because they’re able to work more effectively with challenging students — one of the main causes of burnout.

Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011
ADULT SEL IMPROVES SCHOOLS

Leadership-staff relationships
(Patti & Tobin, 2003)

Staff-staff relationships
(Bryk & Schneider, 2002)

Staff-student relationships
(Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, Durlak et al., 2011, Marzano & Marzano, 2003)

Classroom interaction quality
(Jennings et al., 2017, Brown et al., 2017)
HOW CAN WE PROMOTE ADULT SEL?
Paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment without judgment.
SEL uses an outside-in approach with a focus on building skills; Mindfulness works from the inside-out, building on everyone’s innate capacities for relationship building, such as empathy and kindness. (Lantieri & Zakrezewski, 2015).
MINDFULNESS works from the inside-out; helping us practice monitoring our inner selves and building emotion regulation.
Mindfulness Practices Enhance SEL Skills

- Understanding the nature of mind
- Emotional awareness
- Stating facts without judgment
- Making ethical choices based on awareness and caring

- Emotion regulation
- Inhibitory control
- Deployment of attention
- Showing caring & compassion for others

- Mindful listening
- Thoughtful dialogue
- Managing conflict
MINDFULNESS AWARENESS PRACTICES (MAPS)

Exercises that promote a state of heightened and receptive attention to moment-by-moment experience (Bishop et al., 2004; Siegel, 2007)

Meditation, yoga, tai-chi, mindful walking, centering prayer, dance, qigong etc.
Studies suggest that when teachers practice mindfulness, students’ misbehavior and other stressors become like water off a duck’s back, allowing them to stay focused on what teachers really want to do: teach.

(Greater Good Science Center, 2013)
C.A.R.E
(Cultivating Awareness & Resilience in Education)

• 4 day retreat for teachers
• Provides emotion regulation practice & mindfulness training to teachers
• Positive impacts on teacher wellbeing & student.

(Jennings et al., 2013; Jennings et al., 2017)
C.A.L.M.
Community Approach to Learning Mindfully

- Daily, 20 minute group meetings in school building
- Focus on intention setting & gratitude
- Showed reduction in physical symptoms of chronic stress & self-reported burnout.

(Katz, Harris, Abenavoli, Greenberg, & Jennings, 2018; Harris et al., 2018)
MINDFULNESS IMPROVES TEACHER WELLBEING

**Emotion Regulation**
Mindfulness creates changes in the brain that correspond to less reactivity and better ability to engage in highly emotional activities

Goldin & Gross, 2010; Roemer, Williston, & Rollins, 2015

**Greater Compassion**
People randomly assigned to mindfulness training are more likely to help people in need and have greater self-compassion

Birnie, Spica & Desteno, 2013; Condon, Desbordes, Miller, Neff & Gremer, 2013; Katz et al., 2018;

**Reduced Stress & Anxiety**
Mindfulness reduces feelings of stress and improves anxiety and depression in stressful social isolation

Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Hodge et al., 2013; Shapiro, Brown, & Biegel, 2007; Flook et al., 2013; Harris et al.; Abenavoli., Jennings, Greenberg, Harris, & Katz, 2013; Harris, Jennings, Katz, Abenavoli, & Greenberg, 2016; Katz, Greenberg, Jennings, & Klein, 2016
MINDFULNESS BUILDS NEURAL CONNECTIONS
Sensory Input -> Amygdala -> Prefrontal Cortex -> Balanced Response
Sensory Input → Amygdala


Prefrontal Cortex

Unconscious Reaction: Fight, Flight or Freeze
Mindfulness creates space, shifting brain activity to the prefrontal cortex, reducing unconscious reactivity.
WHAT DOES MINDFULNESS FEEL LIKE?
HOW TO GET STARTED

Set an intention to practice

Intention: A determination to act in a certain way (different from a goal)
Designate a place & time to practice
Choose a resource to support your practice & develop a routine
HOW TO PRACTICE MINDFULNESS?

It’s the regularity of the practice that is most important!
Stop & Notice

Stop what you are doing.

Take a deep breath. Breathe in for a count of 3, hold for a count of one and exhale for a count of 5.

Observe what is happening around you at this moment.

Proceed with what you were doing
Use the “I am aware” sentence starter to check in with yourself

• “I am aware that I am feeling upset at Francis for continually getting out of his seat.”
• “I am aware I’m feeling surprised by how well the guided practice part of the lesson went.”
• “I am aware I’m anxious about seeing Jenna next period, since yesterday we had a tough moment in class.”
Use ‘Wait time’ for you

Use it to mindfully take a nice, deep breath.

If you are standing, notice the weight of your feet on the ground.
Choose what works for you and do it.
THANK YOU!

YOU CAN'T POUR FROM AN EMPTY CUP. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF FIRST.
RESOURCES

Mindfulness for Teachers
Simple Skills for Peace and Productivity in the Classroom
Patricia A. Jennings

Mindful Teacher, Mindful School
Improving Wellbeing in Teaching & Learning
Kevin Hawkins

Aura
Stop, Breathe & Think

Calm

HEADSPACE
FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SCHOOLWIDE SEL, JOIN US THIS SUMMER!