



Stress Reduction Exercises for School Staff

Schools are stressful places. Whether you teach in a classroom with well-behaved 2nd graders or work in an overwhelming adolescence-filled middle school, it is emotional, inherently stressful work. Resilience can substantially and dramatically increase your ability to manage the physical and emotional demands of working in a school. Here are five simple ideas for self-care that can enhance your resilience so you can better manage physical and emotional stressors:

Set aside ten minutes before you go to sleep every night to think of three good things that happened that day. Write down those three things and why they went well. It is important that you have a record of what you wrote. At the end of the week, reread the good things that happened each day, mentally review why they went well, and what you did to contribute to these successful events. In the future, you'll be better equipped to respond positively to similar situations. These three good things will build on themselves throughout the school year.

Start an enjoyable new hobby. Consider a new exercise or workout routine, join a book-of-the-month club in-person or online, or learn a non-competitive sport. Pickleball anyone? This is a great opportunity to try activities you've been interested in but never had the time or drive to get started. For example, try creative hobbies such as playing an instrument or painting, physical hobbies like hiking, cycling, walking, fishing, or yoga, or social hobbies like cooking, book clubs, and volunteering.

There are many studies on the effectiveness of art therapy in reducing stress, and coloring seems to offer similar benefits. Doodling is a way for people to organize their thoughts and focus. Coloring soothingly allows relief and mindfulness without the paralysis that a blank page can cause. You don't have to make many decisions.



For a more immediate approach, sit down, take a load off, reflect on your breathing, concentrate deeply on each breath, and draw from your inner self to find relaxation and quiet. This can be a brief period for yourself, but accomplish this small task every day, even multiple times, and you'll soon feel calmer, relaxed, more agreeable, and happier.

Try one, or all, of the methods from the list below to recharge your physical and emotional self. Tending to our emotional selves is exponentially easier when we are strong, rested, nourished, and cared for.

- Lie on the floor and stretch.
- Sit in the sun for 10 minutes.
- Go to sleep early.
- Spend time with a friend you haven't seen in a while.
- Walk for 20 minutes.
- Clean out a closet or messy drawer.
- Drink lots of water. Add a squirt of lemon or lime.
- Turn off notifications on your phone.
- Make a big pot of soup that will last many days.
- Watch a funny movie or comedy special.

Share these stress reduction methods with your school staff and discuss additional ideas!