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Real Talk About Time Management

35 Best Practices for Educators

Serena Pariser and Edward F. DeRoche

CORWIN



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About the Authors



Serena Pariser, MA, has twelve years of experience teaching in public schools, including charter schools from kindergarten through twelfth grade. She served as an eighth- and ninth-grade ELA teacher for nine years at Gompers Preparatory Academy. She has taught in some of the most challenging school settings from coast to coast, including a boarding school for students from fifteen different Indian tribes in South Dakota, North Dakota, and Nebraska. Most of her full-time teaching experience is at the middle school level, although she also has experience in high school and elementary school settings. She earned her bachelor's degree in education

at Pennsylvania State University and her master's degree in educational technology from San Diego State University. She has been a teacher, teacher coach, and curriculum designer, and she has held leadership positions in K–12 school settings and university settings. Serena was humbled to be recognized as teacher of the year at Gompers Preparatory Academy in the 2008–2009 school year.

Serena presents at conferences state-wide and nationally on topics ranging from character education to classroom management. In June 2018 she was a keynote speaker at the Beginning Institute in Tucson, Arizona. For two years she served as the assistant director of field experience at the University of San Diego, where she had the opportunity to work closely with master's degree students entering the teaching profession. She continues to teach graduate courses on classroom management and character education.

In addition to her work in the United States, Serena has expanded her educational knowledge around the globe. She coached teachers and modeled best practices and engagement strategies in Kathmandu, Nepal, and also taught in rural parts of Turkey.

Serena was selected as a U.S. ambassador by the Fulbright Distinguished Teaching Program. Fulbright gave her an opportunity to coach eleventh- and twelfth-grade teachers in a rural village in Botswana on engagement strategies, smart technology use, and best practices in the classroom.

Serena is the bestselling author of *Real Talk About Classroom Management: 50 Best Practices That Work and Show You Believe in Your Students*, published by Corwin in February 2018. It has also been made into a self-paced online video course, *Skillbuilders*, for both new and experienced teachers. Serena relocated to Minneapolis, Minnesota, to be closer to her family.

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Edward F. DeRoche, MA, MS, PhD, has been an elementary and middle school teacher and principal, a public school board member, a member of two private high school boards, a professor, a program evaluator, a student adviser, a teacher trainer, and the University of San Diego's School of Education dean.

Ed was a past president of the California Association of Teacher Educators and a member of the National Commission on Character Education. Currently he is the director of the Character Education Resource Center in the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego.

With Professor Mary M. Williams, he co-authored one of Corwin's first books on character education, titled *Educating Hearts and Minds: A Comprehensive Character Education Framework*, which is a concise and practical guide for practitioners.

Quality character education doesn't happen without quality leadership at the top. Ed filled a gap in the character education literature by writing *Character Education: A Guide for School Administrators*.

No field can flourish without methods of assessing effectiveness. Ed filled another gap with his book *Evaluating Character Development: 51 Tools for Measuring Success*.

Ed's eight books and more than fifty journal articles constitute an impressive record of scholarship, and he is also the author of the Character Education Resource Center's monthly newsletter, *New You Can Use*, as well as a monthly blog.

He is a consultant, evaluator, author, teacher trainer, and a recipient of several awards, including the Sanford N. McDonald Award for Lifetime Achievement in Character Education from Character.org, the University of San Diego's School of Education's Outstanding Administrator of the Year Award, and the *San Diego Union-Tribune's* Educator of the Year Award.

Under Ed's leadership, the School of Education offered educators the opportunity to earn a master's degree in character education, one of the first advanced degrees in the field. In addition, the Character Education Resource Center pioneered online teacher training in character education for both graduate and professional credit. Now in its twenty-fourth year, the center continues to offer its popular summer conference Character Matters.

Ed is honored to be the co-author of this time management book with Serena and appreciates her advice and counsel as a member of the Character Education Resource Center's Advisory Committee. Ed can be reached at character@sandiego.edu. Feel free to reach out to sign up for his monthly *News You Can Use* blog or just to e-mail.

Introduction

Roughly 61 percent of educators said their work was “always” or “often” stressful, compared with American workers, in general, citing their work was stressful 30 percent of the time, according to a new survey released by the American Federation of Teachers.

—Joel Stice, writing for *Education World*

Yet it’s also reported that over 96 percent of teachers love their jobs. Let’s face it, we love what we do, we just want to be able to feel less stressed each day doing it.

If we could give you more minutes in the day, how would you use your extra time? Did you know that there are 1,440 minutes in a day? It rarely ever feels that way, especially in our classrooms. Raise your hand if you’ve ever heard a teacher say that they’re stressed or overwhelmed—or if you’ve ever said the same thing. If your hand is not up, you are either the luckiest teacher in the world or . . . well . . . *cough* lying.

To be honest, stress isn’t all entirely negative. Actually, a little bit of stress can be helpful in motivating us to perform. We don’t need time management skills when we are on a Caribbean vacation, but we do need them in the classroom. Why? Time management is important when you have a series of tasks to do. That’s teaching. Our success in time management—before class, during instruction, after class, and even in our personal life—can have a real effect on our teaching, for better or worse. It all comes back to the classroom. Time management doesn’t mean that you’ll never feel stressed again, but hopefully the tools in this book will help you mitigate stress on a daily basis.

As stated in the quote above, just under half of us feel stressed daily (46 percent). Ed and I have found ways to keep ourselves with the 54 percent of educators who have found positive means to handle stressful situations. We’d like to share with you what has worked for us.

[Serena] When Ed offered to join me for this book I quickly agreed. Why? Ask anybody who knows him and they will tell you he is one of the best time managers you will ever meet. I mean that. I have yet to meet anybody who can

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manage time like Ed. He makes it seem so easy, always has a smile on his face, and gets things done quickly and thoroughly. He's accomplished more in his lifetime than most and still always seems to have time for friends and family and to lend a helping hand. Also, Ed gives the time management perspective from his many years in not only teaching but also in administrating both an elementary and a middle school, and I bring in the perspective of a teacher. You'll find both perspectives to be equally valuable.

Like Ed, I'm exceptionally skilled at time management. Together we will share what works. Some of these best practices we've discovered on our own, and some we have borrowed from others over the years. We're going to tell it to you like it really is: Time management directly relates to classroom management, your personal sanity, and your overall quality of life inside and outside of the classroom. It's all about how we manage our workload, manage our time, and have a healthy mindset about our responsibilities. We have two personal stories to share.

[Serena] I've been there. It was December, right before winter break to be exact, during my first year as a classroom teacher. I was a sixth-grade teacher at a charter school in West Philadelphia. A few months in, I had made up my mind: I was done. I would put in my resignation midyear. I felt stuck. The tasks had piled up too high, I didn't feel like I was getting anywhere with my twenty-nine rambunctious sixth graders, and I had too many angry parents. The only way out was to quit. I would cut my losses and walk.

In an effort to try to get some moral support, I knocked on the door of my neighboring teacher, Mr. Davis. He had been my lifeline so far that year. As I described my feelings of failure and being completely overwhelmed, he simply said, "You can't leave your first year teaching. You'll get through it." I scraped my pride off of the floor and took his advice. I stayed and completed the first year of what later turned out to be the profession of my dreams.

What changed?

For starters, I stopped working in my classroom late hours every evening. I learned to take breaks and balance myself, even if the work wasn't done. I asked for help when I knew there was an easier way to do something in the classroom. Neighboring teachers started sharing organizational tricks that saved me many precious minutes. These were just a few of the time management techniques that kept me in the classroom that year.

I realized that having strong time management skills was the most important factor in being able to manage stress on the job. It directly affected my ability to connect with students, actually smile while teaching, and have an enormous amount of job satisfaction. I gained control of my classroom, and I wasn't going home mentally exhausted anymore. More importantly, I didn't feel like a hamster on a wheel. I knew where to put my energy, how to work efficiently, how to produce the same if not better results in my classroom, how to have more energy to connect with students, and how to have fun while teaching. Many of the strategies I learned that year are covered in the chapters in this book.

Also, I brought Ed on board to add another perspective. Ed and I met at a conference at the University of San Diego, and he invited me to do a workshop with teachers after my eighth-grade classroom participated in his writing contest. I immediately noticed his remarkably strong time management skills, his dedication to keeping his work-life balance, and the amount he has accomplished with this mindset. He's also here to share his experience.

[Ed] Probably like you, time management is and has been a constant factor in my personal and professional life. One example from my years as a principal comes to mind.

Many of the new teachers I supervised (as well as a few veterans) had similar time management problems as Eileen, a first-year teacher for our sixth-grade students. We liked Eileen; we were influenced by her talents, attitude, and enthusiasm. However, Eileen "overplanned" everything and anything. Her supervising teacher and I had talked to her about this when she was a student teacher, noting that it was not healthy and could increase the stress level of being a teacher. Eileen would spend hours developing unit and lesson plans, often after school was over. Leaving at 5 p.m. was not unusual for her, and I frequently found myself saying, "Eileen, you cannot stay later than the principal—it's time to go home!" This behavior occurred at home as well. She was only one month into her full-time teaching position and I found her volunteering for any activity that was going on at the school. In her classroom, every minute of every day had been mapped out, in writing, noting what she and her students would be doing that day and that week.

In early October, Eileen came into my office showing "end of the day" exhaustion, near tears and frustrated. We began our discussion. After an hour, during which she did most of the talking, we set up another meeting. She shared her belief that if her students were not busy (working), they were

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not learning. According to her, “If I don’t keep them busy, I’m going to have discipline problems,” and “What we can’t get done in class we will get done at home (homework).”

What Eileen didn’t know was that her student teacher supervisor had already alerted me to this situation. Eileen also didn’t know that a couple of parents had inquired about the amount of homework their kids had to do. I asked Eileen if she wanted help, and she said yes. So, along with her student teacher supervisor and a few others, I worked with her throughout the year. Many of the strategies, techniques, and tips that you will find in this book were part of our work with Eileen. Note that by her fourth year at our school, Eileen had become one of the more popular student teacher supervisors.

We surveyed twenty-five of our K–12 teacher colleagues, asking what they considered to be the major time management problems or issues for teachers. While this certainly wasn’t a scientific study, the results rang true with what we’ve seen in the research and in our own experience. In summary, here is what they told us, in no particular order:

- ▶ Grading student work
- ▶ Carving out co-planning time
- ▶ Planning units and lessons; finding resources
- ▶ Organizing classroom materials, displays, and/or supplies
- ▶ Scheduling and attending meetings; co-curricular activities and similar responsibilities
- ▶ Paperwork—staying on top of e-mails from teachers, administrators, and parents
- ▶ Developing and monitoring groupwork
- ▶ Balancing long-term goals of curriculum and assignments with the social, emotional, and academic goals of children
- ▶ Organizing the day—prioritizing the work that has to be done or the curriculum that has to be presented
- ▶ Finding time to meet with individual students
- ▶ Allowing for differentiation (e.g., extra time, modifications of a task, providing enrichment)

- ▶ Technology—much preparation and planning time is spent on e-mailing with parents, posting notices, etc.
- ▶ Finding time for enough writing instruction, practice, reflection, and sharing
- ▶ Practicing empathy—forcing yourself to consider the needs of others and your organization when deciding how to use any discretionary time
- ▶ Stop seeking balance and find the usage of time that makes you the best version of yourself; that means taking time to “recharge”

The teachers we interviewed also expressed frustration as they reported to us the following:

- ▶ “I have no time. When I arrive at school, I am trapped between the two covers of our textbook and the four walls of the classroom.”
- ▶ “I’m trying to handle twelve- to fifteen-hour days. I have almost no time to do some of the things I should be doing—things that need to get done for the benefit of my students.”
- ▶ “You really want to know how I see it—I am overworked, I have to attend unproductive meetings, and I am drowning in testing and paperwork.”

We hear you. We’ve been there. We can help.

We address these topics as best practices in this book in a real and practical way. We’ll show you strategies that you can start using on day one. We also include strategies that have worked for us time and time again. These practices helped us manage our time as we changed roles, moved classrooms, and so on. Learning these strategies took us both years of practice and lots of wasted time and frustration. We’re here to save you a bit of both.

To add to our fun, we went back and asked the same twenty-five educators one other question: “If we could give you more minutes in the day, how would you spend your time?” One teacher said she wouldn’t spend her time answering survey questions, and another replied, “How can you ask me this question when I’m trying to get my classroom ready for school?” The others were too inundated with preparing for a new school year to answer. We get it: You’re busy. You’re really, really busy.

Here’s the bottom line: Teachers that are good time managers have students that are engaged and actively listening.

We all want that.

About This Book

As you read and implement these strategies, we encourage you to be a risk-taker and a problem-solver. Take our advice, tweak it, modify it, and make it work for you.

We spent some time finding the cutting-edge research on time management strategies (that you might not have time to find yourself) and paired this research with our own experiences to provide suggestions for you and your classroom. Our intention isn't to regurgitate time management tips you've heard time and time again. Our intention is to give you the opportunity to take a step back and see where you can make a few small (or perhaps large) adjustments to make a significant difference in the amount of time you could be saving—or gaining. We'd like to make it seem like you actually have more minutes in the day.

In this book you will receive the following:

- ▶ Strategies that have worked over and over again to save time and energy in your classroom
- ▶ Research from the experts about time management and personal wellness
- ▶ Real stories about time management from teachers currently in the field

The real value of the book becomes apparent when you get up on the “balcony” and look down at your classroom, taking “snapshots” of the transformation that has happened and noting how the changes in your time management plan have worked.

Some of the most important things to realize about effective time management are that it will improve your confidence and morale, it will energize and engage your students (and their parents), and it will change the climate of your classroom. Most teachers will testify to one important truth: Good classroom and time management makes for a healthy learning environment for both you and the students.

—Serena and Ed

PART I

TIME MANAGEMENT MINDSET



Illustration by Paper Scraps Inc.

There is one way to achieve time management. And that is . . . to get it done. Time management is a tricky thing. We all have our own way, our own system. Something that works for one person may not work for another.

The most powerful advice I have ever received was learned through showing, not telling. According to Jennifer, a second grade teacher in Pennsylvania,

My parents are two of the most incredibly driven and motivated people I know. Both lawyers but with extremely different styles. I can vividly remember visiting them at their office. I walked into my mom's office and there were papers flying everywhere. Aggressive typing, yellow notepads with scribbles, and phone calls occurring. Next, I walked across the hall to my father's office. One pad of paper on his desk. A single blue pen perfectly aligned to his pad of paper. And my father, completing a task and checking it off.

They worked in the same law office and are both extremely successful lawyers . . . how could one place have two totally different styles? It's taken me quite some time to come to the realization . . . but case in point . . . find what works for you, become good at "your way" and make it happen.



Ask Yourself Questions

If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first fifty-five minutes determining the proper question to ask, for once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than five minutes.

—Albert Einstein

As teachers, we are persistent question askers. We ask questions every day in our classroom when we are checking on our students' behaviors and seeking to discover what they are learning. Questions guide us to understand what our students know and comprehend and help us decide where we need to go from there. They help us unpack what is going on inside the students' minds.

Let's apply this art of asking questions to ourselves and take a reflective look at how we are spending our time and what we might need to adjust to be able to do the things we want to do. Think of time as a limited resource, similar to money. You plan now to have more for later.

Ask yourself these questions:

- ▶ *How* am I spending my time?
- ▶ *What* tasks should I be doing and why? What do I want to accomplish this week/this prep/this hour?
- ▶ *Why* is this important?
- ▶ *When* is the best time to do these tasks?
- ▶ *Where* is the best place to do these tasks?

We'll address the answers to these questions in the chapters to come.

Let's take a look at how you are doing with time. Circle the number that corresponds with how you feel right now for each statement.

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	SOMETIMES AGREE	DISAGREE
On a day-to-day basis, I get everything done that I need to get done.	4	3	2	1
I feel in control of my task list at work and at home.	4	3	2	1
I spend as much time with friends and loved ones as I'd like.	4	3	2	1
I have time to pursue personal interests outside of work.	4	3	2	1
I feel like I have time to connect with students and colleagues daily.	4	3	2	1

Average (Mean) Score

Score:

16–20: If you have a mean score of 16–20, you're doing well with time management. You probably feel like you have a healthy work–life balance, but you might be looking for strategies to up your game even more.

12–15: After a few years in the classroom, most of us are probably in this range. Most of the time you feel like you have your time management under control, but you'd like to have more control consistently throughout the entire year.

8–11: We're here to help! You're thirsty for time management strategies that could greatly improve your classroom, your mental health, and your life. We got you.

7 or below: Let's take this one step at a time. We've all been there.

Take a few minutes to reflect on your score. Use the questions below to guide your thinking or share with a friend or colleague. Taking some time to reflect and ask questions can reveal to ourselves the decisions we are subconsciously making day to day regarding how we spend our time.

Your Turn

1. What was your average score? What would you like it to be?
2. What do you think is the cause of the discrepancy, if there is one?
3. Where did you develop the time management skills you use today?

PART II

PLANNING

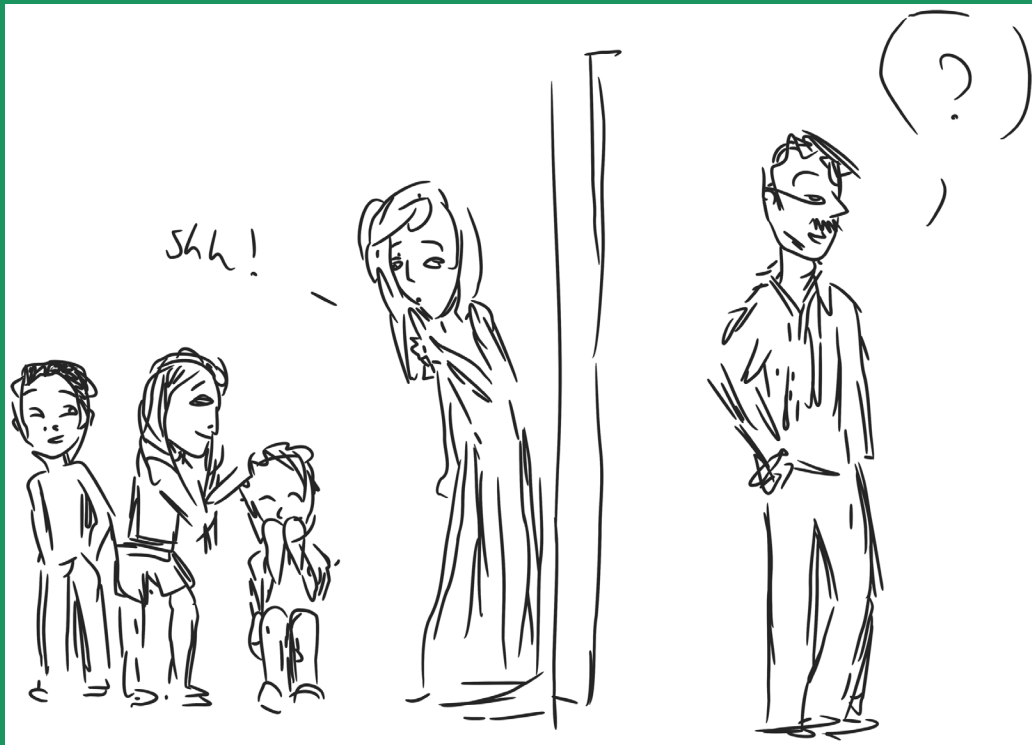


Illustration by Paper Scraps Inc.

When I was a new teacher in the middle school resource room, the principal came in and I had run out of my lesson (poor planning) and we were just sitting around. The principal had his pen and pad. I told the kids to come with me behind the dividers and we sneaked out of the room, leaving him there. Later he asked where I had gone. I don't remember what I told him, but I did invite him back to observe again!

—Ellen, retired high school teacher in Maine

PART III

AT SCHOOL



Illustration by Paper Scraps Inc.

It was my last class of the day and I was teaching my students mindfulness and how to relax so they wouldn't be stressed during testing. One of my girls fell asleep. We couldn't wake her up. I ended up just leaving her and kept going with my lesson. It took her friends about ten minutes to get her to wake up to go home.

—Celina, middle school science teacher in California

PART IV

AT HOME

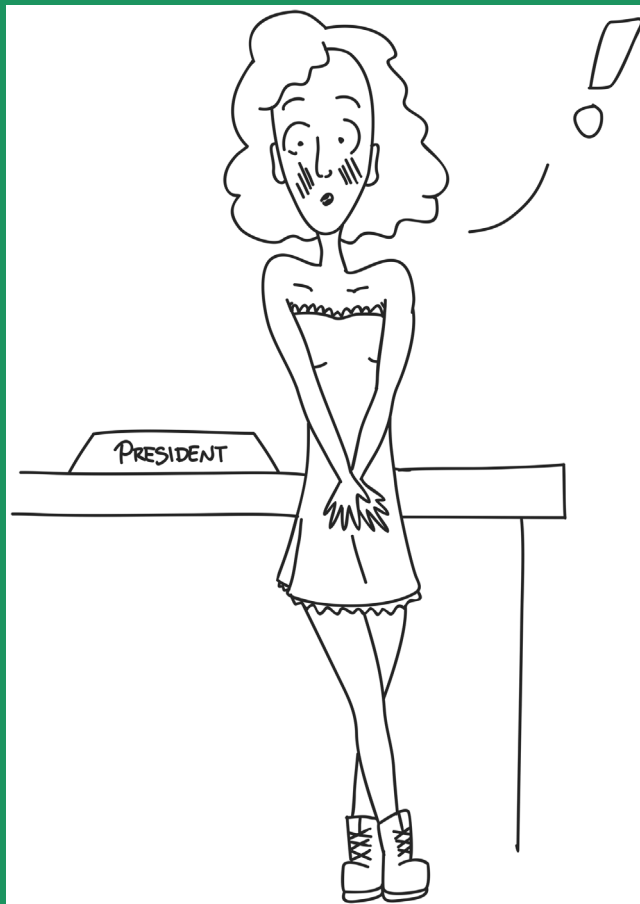


Illustration by Paper Scraps Inc.

A friend of mine once told me that when she arrived at work and took off her coat, she realized that she was only wearing a slip. She had forgotten to get dressed, so she had to go home immediately. She was the secretary to the president of a college, so her job was stressful. No one saw her state of undress, but she obviously was so preoccupied from her stressful job that she had forgotten a major part of her outfit. She told her officemates that she had to run back home to drop off a key for the plumber.

—Melanie, licensed professional counselor



Taking Care of Yourself

In order for you to take care of your classroom, you have to take care of yourself. Eat right, exercise, and get enough sleep. You need a body–mind–spirit balance.

—Serena Pariser

“I have so much to do that there isn’t enough time for self-care.” We’ve all said this to ourselves. You have to make time. Almost nobody has time for self-care, but some people manage to carve out time for it. People who take care of their mind, body, and spirit perform better at work. They are filling their cup.

More and more research is being generated about the benefits of self-care. How are you doing right now? Here is our self-care checklist with implications of what you must do.

1. How often do you skip daily exercise?
 _____ Very often _____ Sometimes _____ Almost never

2. Are you getting enough sleep?
 _____ Most of the time _____ Could use more

3. Do you drink enough water each day?
 _____ I try to _____ I need to do better

4. How often do you find yourself relying on caffeine to get through the day?
 _____ Very often _____ On occasion _____ Not often

5. How often do you skip breakfast and/or lunch and rely on junk food?
 _____ Very often _____ Sometimes _____ Almost never

6. Do you schedule or partake in downtime activities each week? Yes No
 If yes, list your three favorite downtime activities.
 a) _____ b) _____ c) _____

7. How would you rate your ability to delegate tasks to students in your classroom?
 _____ Could be better _____ Really good

8. How would you rate your skill at saying “no” to doing things that you don’t care about or that will take time away from your primary teacher’s tasks?
 _____ I’m good at it _____ I need to learn how to do it better

9. How well do you handle emotions like fear, sadness, or worry?
 _____ I think I handle them well _____ I need to work on doing better

10. Are you a person who is curious about things and enjoys exploring new ideas, skills, and people?
 _____ Yes, that’s me! _____ It depends on a variety of factors _____ Not for me

11. How would you rate your skills in speaking up about events and issues that bother you at school?
 _____ Not good at this _____ Need help to do this _____ I seldom hesitate to express my opinions

12. How would you rate your sense of humor?
 _____ Poor _____ Good _____ Excellent

13. How would you rate the quality of the social interactions and relationships you have at school, outside of school, and in life in general?
 School: _____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Not good at all
 Outside: _____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Not good at all
 Life: _____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Not good at all

There are tips you can use to help you with each item on the self-care checklist. Share these tips with your teaching colleagues (and even noneducators).

[Serena] If I'm stressed about something and I try to forget about it, I get a knot in my stomach before I go to sleep. It doesn't go away and makes it difficult to fall asleep. I found that warming a hot water bottle and holding it on my stomach puts me right to sleep. There's something about heat that relaxes both our body and our mind. I always sleep through the night and wake up feeling refreshed. However, the fact that the knot is there means that my body is telling me something is off.

Everybody has a different way their body may be hinting to them to step up the self-care. What's yours?

Your Turn

1. Did this checklist help increase your awareness of how your emotions and beliefs drive your thinking, influence your behavior, and affect your judgment? If so, how?
2. Would you agree that being more self-reflective helps you keep grounded by slowing down your thinking and emotional processes? If so, how and when do you schedule your thinking time?
3. What items would you add to this checklist?
4. How does your body tell you when you need more self-care? Do you listen? Why or why not?