



# BEST FOR ALL

We will set all students on a path to success.

## **Educator Self-Care**

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**BEST** FOR  
**ALL**

We will set all students on a path to success.

## ACADEMICS

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ALL TENNESSEE STUDENTS WILL  
HAVE ACCESS TO A HIGH-QUALITY  
EDUCATION, NO MATTER WHERE  
THEY LIVE

## WHOLE CHILD

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TENNESSEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
WILL BE EQUIPPED TO SERVE THE  
ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC  
NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS

## EDUCATORS

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TENNESSEE WILL SET A NEW PATH  
FOR THE EDUCATION PROFESSION  
AND BE THE TOP STATE TO  
BECOME AND REMAIN A TEACHER  
AND LEADER

# The Issue at Hand...

- Teachers and other school employees consistently report high levels of occupational stress. Common sources of stress may include high job demand and working with limited resources.
- School employees can also experience “vicarious trauma,” which refers to the emotional strain that results from working with students who have experienced stressful or traumatic events<sup>1</sup>.
- Teachers who carry great stress create classrooms that are less conducive to learning.
- It is very common for educators to consistently put others’ needs before their own.

# The Neuroscience of Stress

- Stress is the body's physical reaction to a situation that causes a sense of fear, frustration, anger, or nervousness. It interacts with both our mental health and emotions.
- Chronic stress is prolonged environmental, social, or psychological stress. **Every educator will have a different upper limit of stress and each will respond differently.**
- "The emotional mind is far quicker than the rational mind, springing into action without pausing even a moment to consider what it is doing."<sup>1</sup>

# The Neuroscience of Stress

Chronic stress and the brain



# The Neuroscience of Stress

Feeling anxious or worried can invoke the “emotional hijacking” response, which interferes with brain function and work productivity.

**1**

Small doses of stress are beneficial to our productivity as adrenaline often encourages our brains to power through challenges.

**2**

Chronic stress produces many negative health outcomes and may trigger the “fight or flight” response.

**3**

“gas pedal vs brake”



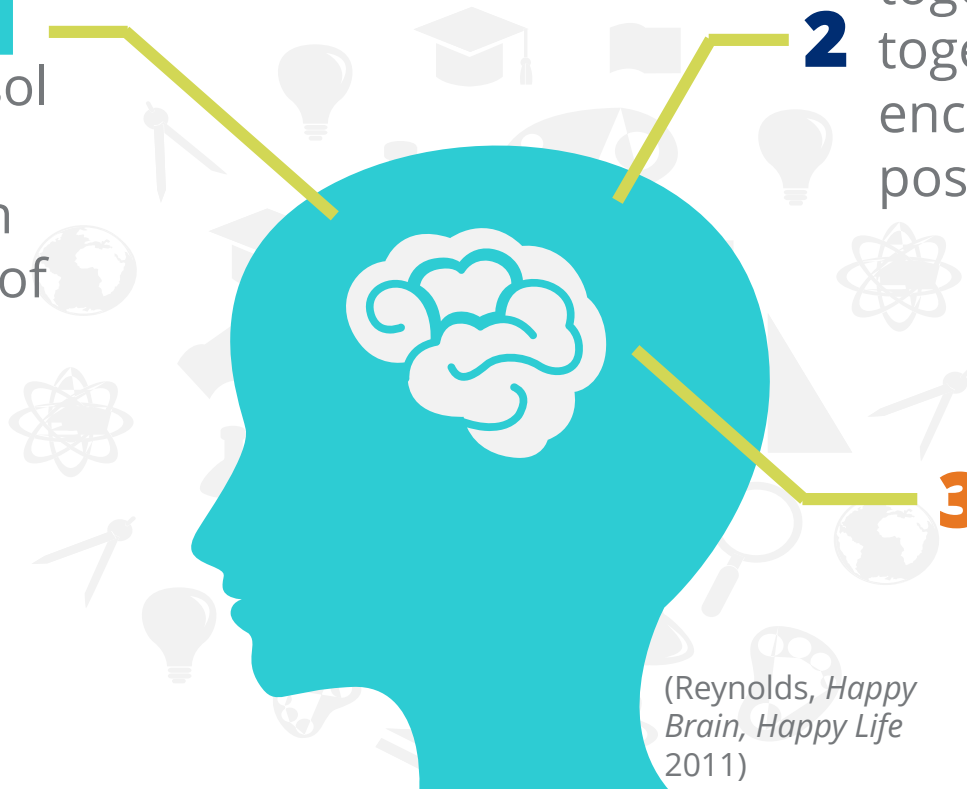
# The Neuroscience of Positivity

“Where attention goes, neural firing flows, and neural connection grows.” **Daniel J. Siegel**

Thinking positive, happy, hopeful, optimistic, joyful thoughts **1** decreases cortisol and produces serotonin, which creates a sense of well-being.

Neurons that fire together, wire together. Positivity encourages more positivity. **2**

Positive feedback and praise are powerful for brain function. **3**



(Reynolds, *Happy Brain, Happy Life* 2011)

# Objectives

1. **Recognize** the importance of educator self-care
2. **Identify** practical ways to implement self-care in your own role
3. **Brainstorm** ways your school and/or district can encourage self-care strategies for educators





# OBJECTIVE 1:

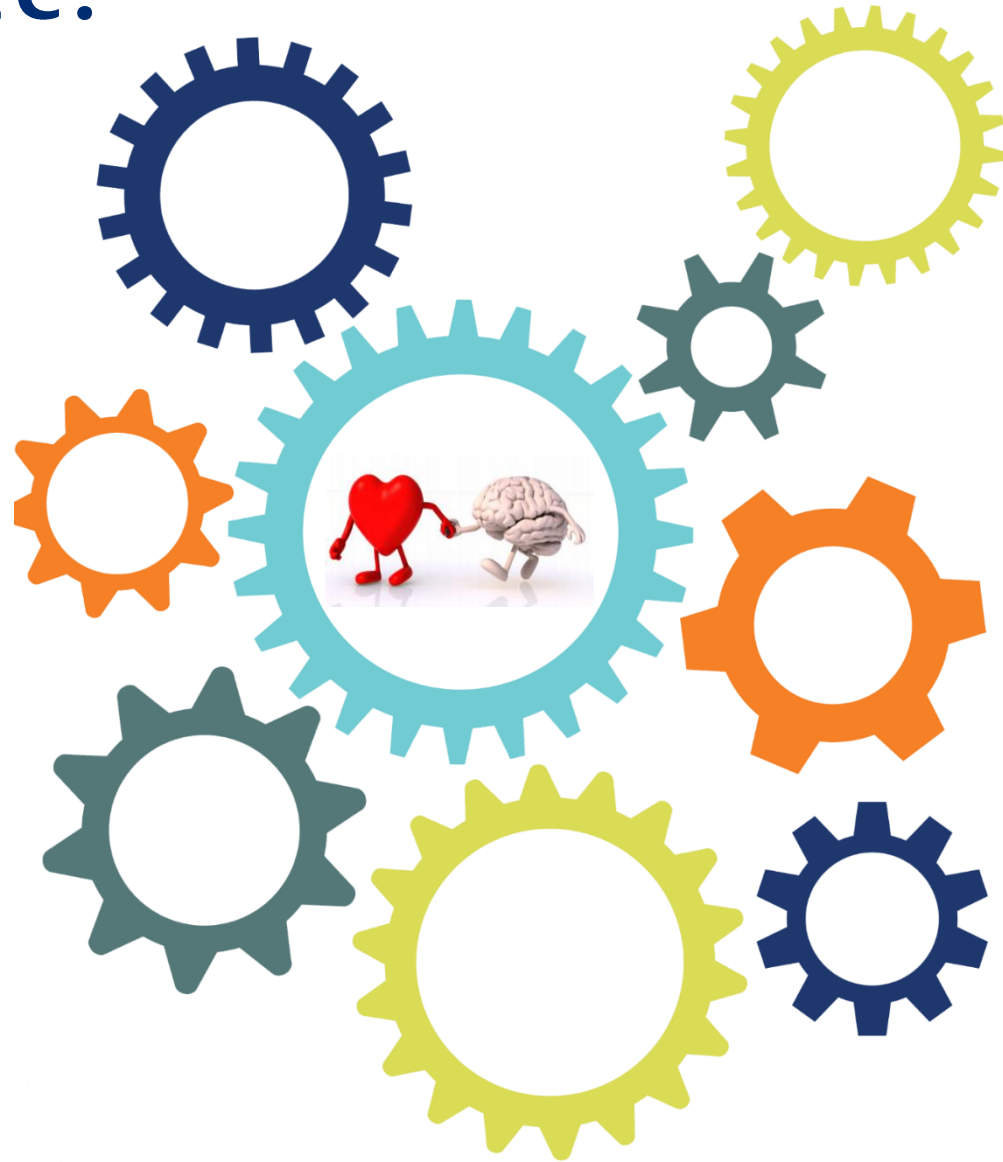
## Recognize the Importance of Educator Self-Care

*“To have lasting well-being in a changing world, we’ve got to be resilient. To be resilient, we’ve got to have inner resources.”*



# What is “Self-Care?”

- How can we take care of ourselves to avoid burnout and compassion fatigue?
- Overall wellness is not a one-time treat.
- Self-care means taking care of one’s mental, emotional, and physical health in an intentional and meaningful way.



# Advice from Teacher of the Year, Kami Lunsford



“Academically, we will catch up. But we won’t catch up if you don’t take care of yourself and you don’t promote that in your classroom.”

# Why Self-Care Matters for Students



- When we feel good, we are more productive.
- Employing effective coping skills not only puts us in a better place professionally but allows us to be role models for our students. When we advocate for appropriate and effective decision making in schools, then we bring about a positive climate for teachers and staff as well as students.
- Healthy and fulfilled school staff perform at their best and take fewer sick days which means more time to be fully present for students.<sup>1</sup>

# Self-Care is a Retention Strategy

- An estimated 23-42% of teachers stop teaching within the first five years.<sup>1</sup>
- Turnover hurts student achievement, is costly for districts, and causes instability within school communities.
- Teachers who possess self-management competencies are more likely to stay in the classroom longer while avoiding burnout.



# Self-Care Avoids Burn-Out

- The culture and climate of schools influence how teachers feel about teaching which in turn affects mental health, teacher burnout, teacher absences, and overall job performance.
- According to the 2020 Tennessee Educator Survey, among teachers who were not returning to teach in their current districts, 67% responded that the leading factor in that decision was culture and climate among teachers and staff.
- Emotions are contagious. Stress and negative emotions spread throughout an environment; stressed teachers cause students to feel stressed as well; practice distancing yourself from negativity.



# We are in Control

- Focusing on the positive and implementing self-care strategies can alleviate some teacher burnout repercussions.
- Educators and educator leaders have control over how they view themselves, their students, the school community, the world, and how they act on these perspectives.
- It's ok to be anxious and have negative emotions but not to let those have power over positive emotions. We do not have to be *happy* all the time. That is simply not realistic. But we can strive to see the positive side of situations even when our job is tough, and anxiety may be high.

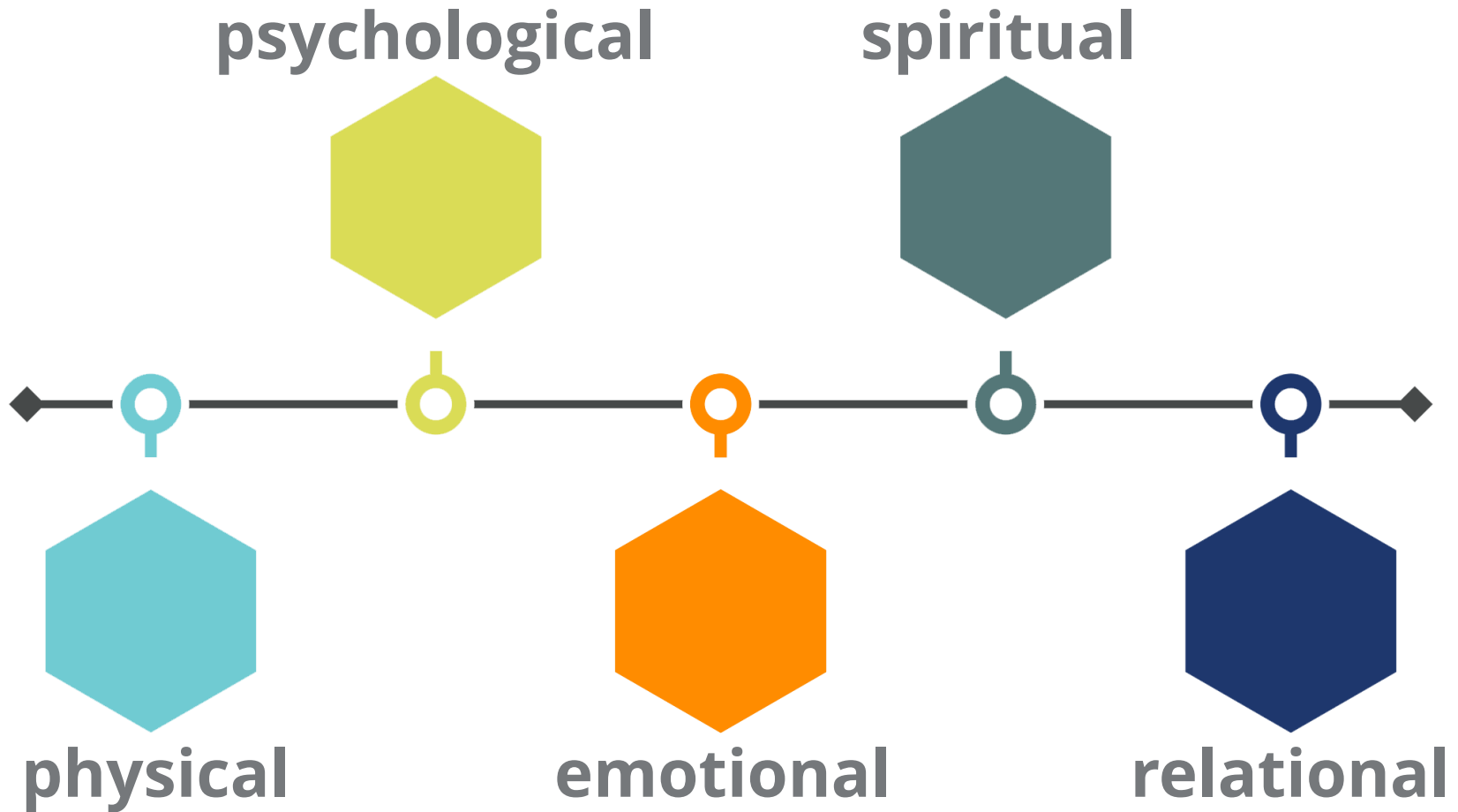
## OBJECTIVE 2:

Identify practical ways to implement self-care in your role.





# Implementing Self-Care workplace







overall balance

List 1 or 2 actions in  
each area that you  
**already do**  
frequently

AND

1 or 2 actions that  
you **would like to do**  
**more of**

Area	Already Do	Would Like to Do
<b>BODY</b> 		
<b>MIND</b> 		
<b>EMOTIONS</b> 		
<b>RELATIONSHIPS</b> 		
<b>SPIRIT</b> 		
<b>WORK</b> 		

# Strategies for Physical Self-Care

- Mindful breathing
  - reduces stress
  - improves immune function
  - increases focus and attention
- Meditation
- Taking walks
- Yoga
- Exercise
- Eating a healthy lunch
- Hydration



# Strategies for Psychological Self-Care

- Focus on positivity
  - Intentionally take in the good
- Recognize inner strengths
- Strengthen resiliency
- Remain a life-long learner
- Healthy routines
  - consistent bedtime
  - reduction of screen time



# Strategies for Emotional Self-Care

- Control the stress response
- Recognize the difference in good stress vs. chronic stress
- Identify major stressors
- Practice patience
- Incorporate activities that help process emotions

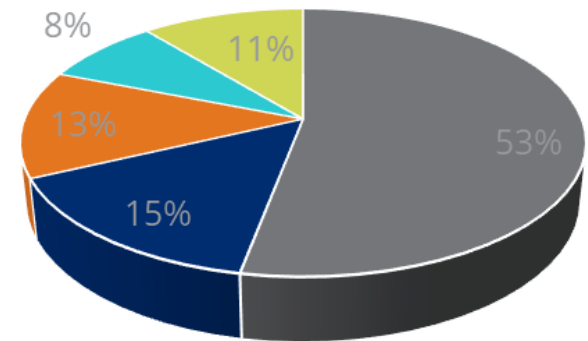


# Strategies for Relationship Self-Care

- Mentor teachers  
81% of those who *participated* in a mentoring program said the program was helpful or very helpful to their professional work

Mentorship Participation

- Not this year
- Once or twice a semester
- Once a month
- Two or three times a month



- Put time and effort into relationships
- Positive relational “bank accounts”

# Strategies for Spiritual Self-Care

- Spiritual self-care fosters a sense of connection to a higher power and helps one find meaning and importance in life
- There are many different spiritual paths; this is a very personal self-practice
  - Prayer and/or meditation
  - Spend time in nature
  - Journaling
  - Reading
  - Connecting to a community



# Strategies for Workplace Self-Care

- Set short and long-term goals
- Focus on positivity
- Take breaks and find quiet time to reflect
- Set boundaries
- Turn off notifications outside of work hours
- Avoid email during the weekends
- Play relaxing music even during class
- Keep your space organized and tidy











# Prioritizing Educator Self-Care: Brian McLaughlin, 2019 Teacher of the Year

“We are up against a lot of challenges but that doesn’t mean that we aren’t allowed to experience joy.”



Choose 3-5 actions  
from your “would like  
to do” list.

**Commit** to do those  
things in the next  
month.

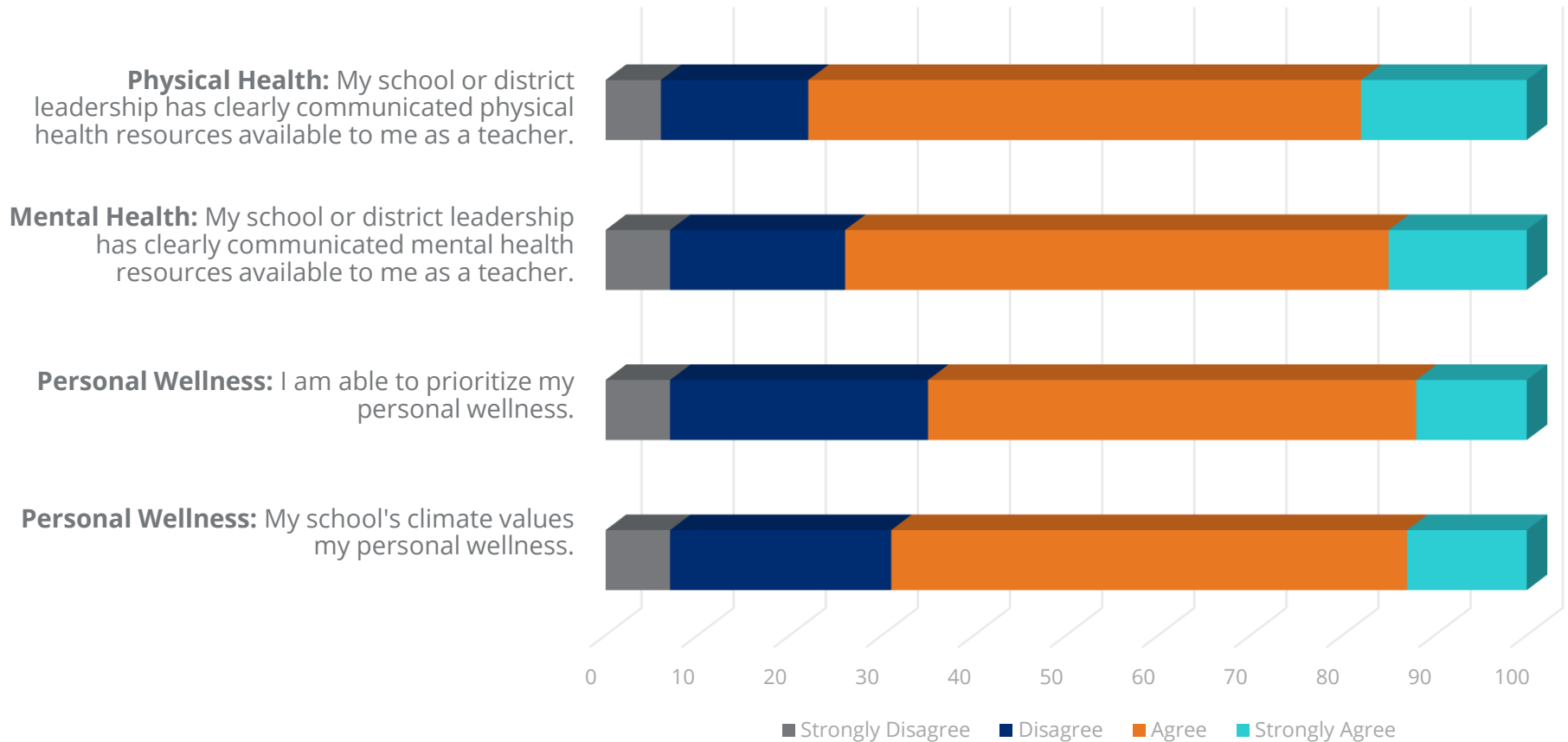
Area	Already Do	Would Like to Do
<b>BODY</b> 		
<b>MIND</b> 		
<b>EMOTIONS</b> 		
<b>RELATIONSHIPS</b> 		
<b>SPIRIT</b> 		
<b>WORK</b> 		

# OBJECTIVE 3:

Brainstorm ways your school/district can encourage self-care strategies for educators



# 2020 Teacher Educator Survey: Good News!



# School and Individual Actions to Reinforce a Self-Care Culture



- **Organizational change (preventative):**
  - promote positive culture among staff
  - implement peer mentoring
  - encourage open communication in which teachers have a voice in school level decision making
  - promote overall wellness
- **Individual interventions:**
  - promote self-care practices among staff

# A Few Final Strategies for a Self-Care Culture



- Staff Circles
- [Staff Breakroom Makeover](#)
- Share resources with staff
- Work with the Coordinated School Health Supervisor in your district to develop a plan that will work for your school's needs
- Partner with local mental health liaisons and remind staff of health insurance benefits

# Additional Resources

- [Shape America](#) Support for implementation of employee wellness plan
- [Educator Self-Care Assessment](#)
- [Headspace Meditation App](#) (free access)



# COVID-19 EMOTIONAL SUPPORT LINE

*Now Open to Tennessee Educators!*

## CALL

888-MHART-TN  
or 888-642-7886

## HOURS

6am - 10pm CT  
7am - 11pm ET

Collaborative project with TN Department of Education, TN Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Mental Health Active Response Team, the Tennessee Association of Alcohol, Drug, & other Addictions Services, National Association of Social Workers-TN Chapter. The COVID-19 Emotional Support Line will provide Tennessee educators with free and confidential support, helping callers experiencing increased anxiety due to the national pandemic.





# Final Personal Reflection

- Think of your “best educator self.” How do you want to be seen by others as an educator? As a school leader? As a district leader?
- What are the words that come to mind?
- Can you now choose one of those words? Write down your one word.
- Can you hold on to that word and when the job gets too stressful, the anxiety may seem like a lot, can you take a breath, center your thoughts and focus on this word?

# Final Thoughts From You: Group Share



- Remember to recognize the importance of self-care, implement strategies that work for you, and encourage a positive climate that promotes self-care within the school.
- What have we discussed today that you can use immediately in your school or classroom?
- If there was an “aha” moment for you or something you can’t wait to share, please place a quick comment in the chat.

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# Questions?

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