

Thank you

FOR YOUR
INTEREST IN
CORWIN

Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *The Distance Learning Playbook, Grades K-12*. In this critical module, the authors outline the importance of taking the time to take care of yourself in order to help others.

LEARN MORE about this title, including Features, Table of Contents and Reviews.

MODULE 1

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF



LEARNING INTENTIONS

- I am learning to take care of myself as I engage with my students.
- I am learning about the impact of trauma on educators.

Perhaps you're surprised that we start a book about distance learning with the recommendation that you need to take care of yourself. But hear us out. If you burn out, if you become exhausted and overwhelmed, you're no good to your students (much less your family, friends, let alone yourself). The vast majority of us did not sign up for this type of teaching. We had images of ourselves arriving at a school building to be greeted by the faces of eager learners who could not wait to see us. There would be start times, breaks (called passing periods and recess), lunches, conversations with colleagues, and a signal that the workday was finished. Of course, we might choose to take some work home with us, perhaps to plan or grade, but there was a separation between work and home. Distance learning can interrupt all of those routines. So, before we engage in distance learning, we need to take care of ourselves. As our friend and colleague Ricky Robertson reminds us, follow the instructions of the flight attendant and put your oxygen mask on first before helping others.

You'll find that in each module in this playbook, we invite you first to draw on your own expertise. Although you may be new to distance learning, you aren't new to education. You have been a student and now you are a teacher, instructional coach, or school leader. And prior knowledge, which is an aspect of prior achievement, has a strong influence on new learning if it is properly leveraged. In fact, learning strategies that integrate prior knowledge with new learning have a strong influence, with an effect size of 0.93 (Hattie, 2018). Consider this an invitation to activate your prior knowledge to develop new ideas.

DRAWING ON MY EXPERTISE

How do you maintain a work-life balance? How can you do so when working from home? How do you do so when working at school?



For the vast majority of us, our first experience at distance learning started as a result of the global pandemic COVID-19. This book is not just about that. It's about developing and delivering quality distance learning experiences for students—anywhere, anytime. But we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the initiation of this type of teaching. Who could have imagined that we would be sheltering in place, anxious about a monster that could harm us or our loved ones? But the current crisis is just the most recent, albeit major, trauma we have experienced. Unlike other traumatic experiences, this one is global and has touched every member of the human race. There is some comfort in that but it's still difficult and surreal. It also makes us stop to think about the other traumas we have experienced. You see, trauma is not just something that happens to “them”—our students or other people. It's hard to imagine a person who has reached the age of 25 who hasn't experienced at least one adverse childhood event:

- Divorce
- Death of a loved one
- A loved one incarcerated
- Community violence
- Poverty
- Exposure to domestic violence
- Living with someone who has mental illness or who is suicidal
- Alcohol or drug addiction in the home

We carry that trauma with us. As Van der Kolk noted in the title of his 2015 book, “The body keeps the score.” By that, he meant that traumatic experiences inevitably leave their traces on our minds, emotions, and even on our physical health. We all have those traces and some of us have yet to address the impact. That's why social and emotional learning needs to continue with adults and does not end upon graduation from high school. And, as we noted earlier, additional traumatic experiences accumulate throughout our lives.

It's important to acknowledge the issue. An ostrich approach is not useful. Instead, schools can engage in social and emotional learning for adults, if for no other reason but the fact that teachers model behaviors that students mimic. When we model healthy, growth-producing relationships, students see how they work. When we model respect, kindness, and a range of emotions, students notice how we regulate and respond. But even more importantly, we believe, is the opportunity to help adults continue their social and emotional learning journey and become happier, healthier members of the community, both at school and in the wider community.



ALTHOUGH
YOU MAY
BE NEW TO
DISTANCE
LEARNING,
YOU AREN'T
NEW TO
EDUCATION.



TRAUMA IS
PART OF OUR
LIVES, AND WE
DON'T WANT
TO EXACERBATE
IT DURING
DISTANCE
LEARNING
EFFORTS.

Yes, that got deep, but we want to recognize that trauma is part of our lives and don't want to exacerbate it during distance learning efforts. There are a number of recommendations, based on evidence from other stressful times in the lives of humans as well as long-term "work at home" studies, that we can use to inform, and take care of, ourselves. We will chunk these into some groups and provide you an opportunity to consider your plan. The first is about your workspace at home. The recommendations are to

- Keep a dedicated workspace
- Set ground rules with the people in your space

The dedicated office space does not have to be a home office. That's not what we mean. But rather, a place where you can easily teach and engage students. Brittini Glass set up a space in her apartment, in the corner of her kitchen.

As she said, "I like the light here and when I'm done working, I can leave the kitchen and go to another area of my apartment away from work." Ms. Glass has all of her supplies in a rolling file cabinet near the small table that she uses to hold her computer. She has a light behind the computer that highlights her face so that students can see her better. Ms. Glass adds, "I also have familiar items from the classroom behind me on a shelf so that it looks a little more like school when we are live."

Mike Perez has set up a place in his unfinished basement. Like Ms. Glass, he has all of his supplies at the ready. He has a standing desk to avoid sitting all day. "When I'm talking with students, I'm used to standing. This just feels more natural to me," he says. "I think I project better when I stand and I'm amazed at how much they watch me. I don't talk the whole time, but when I do, I prefer to stand."

In addition to having a dedicated space in your living environment to teach, it's important to set the ground rules with the others who live in the home. Of course, we all understand the child who needs something and interrupts a live class meeting or the pet that jumps up on the table and walks in front of the computer. It's just that your stress level can be reduced when you have clear guidelines for people. Ms. Glass asks that people in her home text her to let her know that they're coming into the kitchen so she is not surprised. Mr. Perez asks his family not to play around his workspace so that things are not moved. He also asks that they wash clothes on the weekend or in the evening so that the machines are not running while he is working.



Kameron Warfield
talks about
her dedicated
workspace.

NOTE TO SELF

My dedicated workspace is

I need to have the following items near me:

My virtual background is a blank wall, a picture of my regular class, something not too distracting for my students.

Guidelines that I need to share with others when working from home include

- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---

The second group of recommendations focuses on routines and includes that you

- Create a morning routine
- Maintain regular hours
- Schedule breaks
- End your day with a routine

Routines are useful for us as they help us organize, plan, and predict. One of the risks with distance learning is that our routines are disrupted, and we are not sure how to re-establish them. In future modules, we'll focus on routines for students. For now, we need to focus on the routines for us, the educators.

As an example of establishing routines, Stephany Cardenas walks early each morning and then has breakfast with her family. She has scheduled breaks in her day that mirror the schedule she had previously. She takes twenty minutes mid-morning for recess, forty-five minutes for lunch, and then a short stretch break in the afternoon. She ends her workday by sending a summary email to her students, thanking them for their work for the day and reminding them about the learning for the next day. Ms. Cardenas also has a routine for the end of her day, which is to either read or meditate. As she says, "I take about 20 minutes each night for some alone time. I'm an avid reader, so that's calming for me. But a few days per week, I like to mediate and just sit quietly and let my mind go. Then I'm ready to sleep and am eager for the next day."

Claudia Readwright is an instructional coach in the Fresno Unified School District in California, specializing in primary education.



Brian Kennedy shares his morning routines and his schedule.



By Claudia Readwright

A VIEW FROM THE EARLY YEARS

We have been invited to activate our prior knowledge in order to develop new ideas. I thought it prudent to take a lesson from the Mister Roger's playbook. If we employ a visual cue that signals the beginning and ending of our workday, it can serve as a reminder to our children and ourselves. Mister Rogers enters his "television house," removes and hangs up his jacket, then changes out of his street shoes into his sneakers. Our own routines should similarly aid us in bracketing our workdays. Apply your early learning lens to yourself, as you know how important it is to continue our own social and emotional learning journey.

Routines make children feel welcome and included, and the same applies to us as adults. Striking yoga poses or other gentle movement activities, accompanied by peaceful music, is a way to engage with yourself first thing in the morning. Other early morning routines might include a short walk, a few quiet minutes outside on your porch or balcony, or listening to a favorite podcast while you get ready.

Some of the "Work at Home" recommendations are easy enough to implement and echo what we teach our own students. How might you set up a dedicated workspace? Maybe that could include a trifold science board

created to look like the mini focus board you have in your physical classroom. It could include an emotions poster, a number line, 5 and 10 frames, an alphabet frieze, and the current art print for discussion. It is a manageable size, portable, and can be folded flat if needed. Having your daily teaching items easily available to you can lower your stress level when teaching online.

How might we establish ground rules in our shared space? Your family and your pets are an important part of your life, just as they are for the children we teach. Set up a signal with your family that shows when you'll be teaching in a live session—perhaps a kind note on the door. A hat or crown reminds others this is a time for no interruptions (barring emergencies, of course). And if a family member or pet wanders into the camera frame, anyway, introduce them. You're modeling for your own students how we handle unexpected interruptions in ways that are graceful and kind.

Four focus areas have given our early learning team time to reflect and steer our self-care efforts in a positive direction. For a Health benefit, try including at least forty minutes of daily exercise, three days a week. In the Love category, include doing something just for you. By stepping out of your comfort zone, and trying something new, you can gain a sense of Competence. If we focus on demonstrating our thankfulness, we may notice our Gratitude quotient grows. In addition, weekly check-ins with colleagues are often productive in sharing common challenges and generating new ideas.

Close your workday with an emotional check-in. Celebrate what you have accomplished and set a small goal for tomorrow. Remember that making each day special for children starts with you being you. Then hang up your cardigan for the day and know that you've done well.

NOTE TO SELF

MY MORNING ROUTINE OPTIONS	WHEN I WILL TAKE BREAKS	MY END-OF-DAY ROUTINE OPTIONS

Now, highlight one morning routine option and one end-of-day routine and try them for two weeks. If it's not helping you, change it up and try something else. But for the sake of your family, your students, and your well-being, find some routines that work and use them regularly.

The third group of recommendations focuses on socialization opportunities. We are professionals, and professionals socialize with other professionals. There are a number of options for doing this, including online and off-line activities. When we are teaching at a distance, we need to remember that we need to socialize with people outside of our homes and keep actively engaged in our friend networks. We thrive on both personal and professional connections and we should not forget this necessity as we teach from a distance. Thus, you should consider opportunities to

- Socialize with colleagues
- Have a connected and meaningful conversation each day with someone outside of your home

Chrissy Thompson committed to attend one online professional learning event per month so that she could stay connected with others in her profession. As she said, "I want to feel part of something larger. It started with an online book club. I wasn't sure that I would like it, but the conversation with people all over the world, especially in the breakout rooms, was amazing and energizing for me. So, I do something online with the profession each month. I get so many great ideas and I just really like the interactions I get to have with other educators. At my school, we have weekly team meetings, which are also great. But these wider opportunities make me feel connected."

Armando Hueso made a commitment to have at least one conversation per day with someone outside of his family. As he says, "I take a coffee break every day and talk with someone. Sometimes it's people from my school but sometimes it's others. I schedule it so that we're both free. I like video calls, but some people prefer voice only calls. These conversations are important for me and they keep me grounded. I see friends and such but because I'm not at a school building, I miss the connections with my colleagues. These coffee breaks meet that need for me."

Your turn. Take a look at the prompt on the next page—how will you socialize with colleagues and ensure that you have one meaningful, connected conversation each day with someone outside of your home?

In addition to the three groups of personal support discussed above, it's important for people to take care of themselves physically. Without sounding too touchy-feely or reinforcing stereotypes about Southern California or Australia (where we live), managing our stress, eating healthily, and exercising regularly are important to our well-being. For example, Sharla Green says, "I was feeling a little stressed when I started distance learning. No, actually, a lot stressed. My friend recommended an app for me, but I didn't try it. My stress kept increasing and another person asked why I bit her head off, so I decided I needed to do something. I use an app called Pacifica but there are lots of them out there. I'm better for it and my students have even noticed that I'm calmer in class."

Your turn. What can you do to support your well-being?

NOTE TO SELF

My plan for stress management:

My plan for healthy eating:

My plan for getting regular sleep:

My exercise plan:



Available for download at resources.corwin.com/distancelearningplaybook

See, it wasn't that hard. But we know that developing a wellness plan is only part of it. Having a commitment partner increases the likelihood that you will actually implement your plans. Angelica Chavez was very honest about this. As she said, she had a lot of plans in her mind and sometimes they were even written out. But they were rarely implemented. When she learned about the value of commitment partners, she contacted another teacher on her grade level and asked if they could check in with each other each week. "I knew that I would have to answer to Pam," Ms. Chavez said, "so I would really do it. But it turns out, I really like what I decided to do and was super happy to talk with her and share my success. I don't know what I was waiting for all of those years. If I had only known."

It's your turn. Who could serve as your commitment partner and what would you ask of that person?



Kristen Speck talks about her stress management techniques.

My commitment partner is	_____
I need the following from this person:	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
We will check in	<input type="checkbox"/> Daily <input type="checkbox"/> Two times per week <input type="checkbox"/> Three times per week <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Biweekly



Available for download at resources.corwin.com/distancelearningplaybook

The last area we'd like to focus on, in terms of taking care of yourself, is compassion fatigue. Most of the time, teachers experience compassion satisfaction, which is the pleasure we derive from being able to do our work well (Stamm, 2010). When we feel effective, especially when we see evidence of our students' learning, our compassion satisfaction increases and we enjoy our work.

The other side of this coin is compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue is a combination of physical, emotional, and spiritual depletion associated with the trauma-related work we do where others are in significant emotional pain or physical distress. It's known as the high cost of caring. As Figley (2002) notes, "Compassion fatigue is a state experienced by those helping people in distress; it is an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it can create a secondary traumatic stress for the helper" (p. 1435). As Elliott, Elliott, and Spears (2018) note,

Symptoms can develop over a period of years, or after as little as six weeks on the job. Lowered tolerance for frustration, an aversion to working with certain students, and decreased job satisfaction are just a few of the effects that represent a significant risk to job performance as well as to teachers' own personal, emotional, and physical well-being. (p. 29)

The signs of compassion fatigue include

- Isolation
- Emotional outbursts
- Sadness, apathy
- Impulse to rescue anyone in need
- Persistent physical ailments
- Substance abuse
- Hypervigilance or hyperarousal
- Recurring nightmares or flashbacks
- Excessive complaints about colleagues, management, or those being helped

The American Academy of Family Physicians developed a self-assessment tool for health-care workers, which we have adapted for educators (see Figure 1.1). If you have these signs, please seek help. We need you. Your students need you. And compassion fatigue can be overcome.



COMPASSION
FATIGUE IS A
COMBINATION
OF PHYSICAL,
EMOTIONAL,
AND SPIRITUAL
DEPLETION
ASSOCIATED
WITH THE
WORK WE DO
WITH OTHERS.


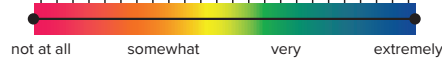

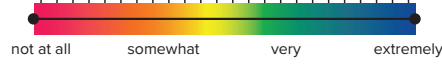
Figure 1.1 Compassion Fatigue Inventory

Personal concerns commonly intrude on my professional role.	Yes	No
My colleagues seem to lack understanding.	Yes	No
I find even small changes enormously draining.	Yes	No
I can't seem to recover quickly after association with trauma.	Yes	No
Association with trauma affects me very deeply.	Yes	No
My students' stress affects me deeply.	Yes	No
I have lost my sense of hopefulness.	Yes	No
I feel vulnerable all the time.	Yes	No
I feel overwhelmed by unfinished personal business.	Yes	No

Source: Used with permission from Overcoming Compassion Fatigue, Apr., 2000, Vol. 7, No. 4, *Family Practice Management*. Copyright © 2000 American Academy of Family Physicians. All rights reserved.















CONCLUSION

We started with a recommendation to take care of yourself. We hope you take this seriously and carefully consider actions you can take. We promise that the rest of the book focuses on teaching and learning in distance learning using the knowledge gained from the Visible Learning database. As a final task for this module, now that you have a sense of what might be involved in taking care of yourself, complete the following self-assessment.

FACTOR	USING THE "TRAFFIC LIGHT" SCALE, EVALUATE YOUR CURRENT LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION (GREEN IS GOOD OR REGULARLY; RED IS THE OPPOSITE).	USING THE SCALE BELOW, DETERMINE HOW IMPORTANT THIS FACTOR IS FOR YOU.
Recognizing trauma		
Creating a workspace		

(Continued)

(Continued)

FACTOR	USING THE “TRAFFIC LIGHT” SCALE, EVALUATE YOUR CURRENT LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION (GREEN IS GOOD OR REGULARLY; RED IS THE OPPOSITE).	USING THE SCALE BELOW, DETERMINE HOW IMPORTANT THIS FACTOR IS FOR YOU.
Establishing personal routines		 not at all somewhat very extremely
Socializing with others		 not at all somewhat very extremely
Managing stress		 not at all somewhat very extremely
Eating and sleeping well		 not at all somewhat very extremely
Exercising		 not at all somewhat very extremely
Finding a commitment partner		 not at all somewhat very extremely
Recognizing compassion fatigue		 not at all somewhat very extremely

SUCCESS CRITERIA

- I can identify a place to work.
- I can practice my routines and manage my schedule.
- I have at least one connected conversation per day with someone outside of my home.
- I have a plan for my personal well-being.
- I recognize the signs of trauma and compassion fatigue.