

# 8 Practical Strategies to Support Yourself and Your Teachers

Teaching is already a high burnout profession and now educators are facing yet another COVID-19 surge and all of the stressors that come with it. **As a K-12 leader, what can you do to support your teachers when you yourself face endless challenges?**

Try these 8 practical strategies, created in collaboration with [Analiza Quiroz Wolf](#), an Executive Coach, Facilitator, and Strategy Consultant on a mission to support leaders, especially people of color and women, be leaders in their organizations – without sacrificing family or self-care. Analiza also leads the [Boss Mamas cohort program](#) for women leaders and the [Boss Mamas Podcast](#). She can be found at [www.analizawolf.com](http://www.analizawolf.com).

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## STRATEGY 1

### Oxygen Mask Principle

Leaders must focus on themselves first. We can't solve everyone else's problems if we are so overwhelmed with stress.

- Follow the **Oxygen Mask Principle**: fit your own oxygen mask first. Then, you can breathe... and help others.

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## STRATEGY

### The "3 Gifts" Technique

When you look back at this challenging time, what would make you grateful for this experience? Answer this question using the "3 Gifts" technique.

1. **Knowledge** – What would I need to learn so that the payoff in the future is much larger than what it's costing me now?
2. **Power** – What strength will I grow to handle this challenge?
3. **Strength** – What action will I take that will be more impactful than the problem I am experiencing?

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## STRATEGY 3

### Assess Your Stress

Be aware of your level of stress. Assess your stress using this simple scale (0 – 10, 10 being overwhelmed with stress).

- **0 – 3 Green Zone**: ideal for problem solving, seeing different perspectives, flexible, creative, more rational
- **4 – 6 Yellow Zone**
- **7 – 10 Red Zone**: flight or fight response, unable to think rationally, narrow perspective, negative
  - If you're in the Red Zone, best not to let say anything or eat/drink anything.

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## STRATEGY 4

### Take A Mindful Moment

A mindful moment is a short opportunity to pause, even amidst a busy day. There are many resources for short meditations that can be done, even during a school day.

- Take a breath: pause and notice the moment, sit in silence, remember your intention, gratitude.
- Try not to make decisions – sleep on it if you can.
- Listen to music, watch something funny to laugh.
- Take a nap, shower, lay down, close your eyes, relax your body.
- Move your body – dance, jump, go for a walk, go outdoors.
- Go off devices for a bit and let yourself have some mental space.
- Remember that this challenge is temporary.
- Learn to take action versus learned helplessness.

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## STRATEGY 5

How to keep your stress low – proactively **stop**.

### Proactively Stop

- Less news, social media.
- Less alcohol.
- Stop poor sleep habits – don't compromise sleep, don't work/watch TV in bed, no devices in bed, limit caffeine, limit lights.

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## STRATEGY 6

How to keep sustain yourselves – proactively **start**.

### Proactively Start

- View self-care as essential, do one thing daily for yourself (even 5 minutes) to reduce your stress.
- Create a bedtime routine – warm shower, meditation, reading, journaling.
- Move your body.
- Connect with others.
- Therapy, meditation.
- Engage in a hobby – baking, being in nature, reading, playing games.
- Go after your dreams.

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## STRATEGY 7

How to take this to your team:

### Take This To Your Team

#### -Model

#### -Lead systemic change

#### -Collect feedback

#### -Connect

- Model for your team and share your journey. **Be vulnerable**. Share what you are doing to care for yourself.
- Integrate best practices into your systems
  - During meetings, practice centering, ask about self-care, gratitude, and exercise.
  - Normalize asking for help and proactively ask, "What can I do to help?"
  - Prioritize what is most essential. Ask, "What can be pulled off?"
- Ask your team or teachers what they need.
  - Are there opportunities for half day mental health day?
  - If possible, get non-teaching jobs off of their plates.
  - See where you can be flexible with your organizational policies (cut meetings – less time or less often?).
  - Integrate self-care into team culture – for example, February is love yourself month.
- Connect with your team. Learn their love languages: words of affirmation, touch, service, time, and gifts.

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## STRATEGY 8

Continue to learn. Share resources and tips on emotional wellness and self-care as you go. Take away stigma of therapy.

### Continue Your Journey

- Use a meditation tool like Headspace to build healthy habits that last a lifetime. Headspace offers free access (primary-secondary) teachers and supporting staff in the US, UK, Canada, and Australia: <https://www.headspace.com/educators>
- Visit PowerMyLearning's website to access the full toolkit, which includes additional resources for teachers and students: <https://hubs.la/Q012Sjvv0>