

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Reproducible pages are in italics.

About the Author	ix
Introduction	1
What Self-Care Is	3
What You Can Find in This Book	5
Who Can Use This Book	6
How You Can Use This Book	6
Your Pre-Engagement	7
CHAPTER 1	
The Foundation	9
Foundation Strategies	9
Your Starting Place	10
Self-Care Survey: Starting Point	10
Daily Time Audit: Starting Point	14
The Framework: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	16
Needs Identification Strategies	18
My Action Plan: Turn Inward	21
Reflection Questions	24
Reflection Questions for Accountability	
Partners and Groups	26
CHAPTER 2	
Physiological Needs	29
Physiological Strategies	31
Diet Strategies	31
Exercise Strategies	32

Sleep Strategies	33
General Physiology Strategies.	33
My Level One Action Plan: Physiological Needs	34
Reflection Questions	38
Reflection Questions for Accountability Partners and Groups	40
CHAPTER 3	
Safety Needs	43
Safety Strategies.	45
My Level Two Action Plan: Safety Needs	47
Reflection Questions	50
Reflection Questions for Accountability Partners and Groups	52
CHAPTER 4	
Belonging Needs	55
Belonging Strategies	60
My Level Three Action Plan: Belonging Needs	62
Reflection Questions	66
Reflection Questions for Accountability Partners and Groups	68
CHAPTER 5	
Esteem Needs	71
Esteem Strategies.	76
My Level Four Action Plan: Esteem Needs.	78
Reflection Questions	82
Reflection Questions for Accountability Partners and Groups	84
CHAPTER 6	
Self-Actualization Needs	87
Self-Actualization Strategies.	91
My Level Five Action Plan: Self-Actualization Needs	93
Reflection Questions	96
Reflection Questions for Accountability Partners and Groups	98

CHAPTER 7

Transcendence Needs	101
Transcendence Strategies	103
Inspiration Strategies	103
Gratitude Strategies	104
Mindfulness Strategies	106
Altruism Strategies	107
My Level Six Action Plan: Transcendence Needs	109
Reflection Questions	112
Reflection Questions for Accountability Partners and Groups	114

EPILOGUE

Final Thoughts	117
Self-Care Survey: Growth Check	118
Daily Time Audit: Growth Check	121

APPENDIX

My Personalized Self-Care Plan	123
<i>Self-Care Plan</i>	124

References and Resources	125
---------------------------------------	-----

Index	137
--------------------	-----

Introduction

While I was sitting in the back of my Weight Watchers meeting, my phone notifications started piling up. Something I said while conducting teacher training a few days prior had gone viral. (By *viral*, I mean within one day of the original post, a meme attributed to my name had 6,200 reactions. There were well over 400 comments and 7,300 shares on one site.) Oh boy.

I'll be perfectly honest with you; my first thought was *I hope I didn't screw this up*. I scrambled to the internet, typed in some key phrases, and was unbelievably relieved to see that yes—numerous articles, education blogs, and reports backed up what I had said. Thank goodness.

You see, during that teacher training, I said, “Teachers make more minute-by-minute decisions than brain surgeons, and that is why you’re going home so exhausted each day.” Now, we can certainly argue the merits of my wording. For instance, I believe brain surgeons are called *neurosurgeons*, and I’m not sure we want said neurosurgeons making a whole lot of decisions when they’re operating on our brains. However, my point is the average teacher makes 1,500 educational decisions every school day. In an average six-hour day in front of students, teachers make more than four educational decisions per minute (BusyTeacher.org, n.d.), and that is exhausting.

Next, I made a fatal decision—I started to read the comments. I know it was foolish. I really do know better than to do this. I once heard someone say reading the comments is like eating a sandwich that might have broken glass in it, but I did it anyway. For every wonderful shout-out to a teacher, there were (grammatically incorrect and wildly misspelled) posts about how lazy teachers are (only

teaching half the year); how these data are stupid; how teachers are dumb; how my last name, Boogren, looks like *booger*; how teachers are overpaid; and on and on—and *I couldn't stop reading them*. I felt exposed and vulnerable. (Let me remind you that I was at a Weight Watchers meeting, stripped down to my tank top and shorts to get on the scale in front of a stranger—as if I didn't already feel vulnerable enough.)

I was devastated. These comments simply were not in line with my worldview. They didn't match my experience as a lifelong educator and an educational researcher, nor did they match the data regarding teacher retention. Those data claim that the profession loses 50 percent of new teachers within the first five years due to excruciating demands; 4 percent *more* professionals than other professions; and 15.7 percent of teachers every year, with fewer than 34 percent leaving for retirement (Riggs, 2013; Westervelt, 2016).

Finally, I thought, *I have something to say here. I deserve to respond to these comments for the sake of all the amazing educators I have the honor and privilege of working with, but I refuse to get into an online shouting match.*

So my response to the naysayers is that I've worked with a lot of teachers in my career. Do I fully admit there are some very bad ones in the mix? You bet I do. I've seen them. I've coached them. They've made me cry. Can I tell you story after story about the ridiculous things they do? I could go on and on—but I choose not to, because for every teacher who isn't enhancing the profession, ten others are working their tails off to be intentionally inviting to their students, often to the detriment of their own families, health, and sanity (Boogren, 2012; Novak & Purkey, 2001). These teachers need someone to acknowledge the incredible demands and pressures felt in schools and classrooms all over the country because the public often has a skewed view of the job's realities. And when the public thinks they understand a teacher's job, they feel like they have the right to comment, judge, evaluate, and criticize, and that is crushing to the hardworking educators I've had the pleasure of working with.

The reality is that teachers are public servants, and people have a right to share their opinions about teachers just as they do about police officers, doctors, and government officials. But criticism

hurts when you intimately know the other side. For teachers, that side includes the hours revising lesson plans to ensure challenging advanced students while simultaneously scaffolding students who need more time. It's the late nights at school coaching, grading, planning, sponsoring, cheering, meeting, and fretting. It's having trouble feeling fully present with your family because students also feel like family and, when you're not with them, you're not sure how much love they're getting. It's having trouble feeling fully present with students because you're carrying guilt about spending the evening at home grading papers, creating lesson plans, and responding to emails and texts from students and parents. It's paperwork, paperwork, paperwork. It's figuring out how to provide feedback that strikes the precarious balance between loving and pushing—between pointing out what's correct and being honest about what's off the mark. It's the hours spent with colleagues focused on one student, when ten more need that same attention. It's presenting a lesson while also being aware of each student's behavior in your classroom so you can direct the appropriate attention, support, love, and discipline each student needs. It's testing and assessing, and knowing that both the students and their teachers will face unfair consequences because of one test. It's having a perfect day when no one visits your classroom, and having everything fall apart when twelve visitors arrive for instructional rounds. It's setting up field trips, guest speakers, and parent volunteers—tasks so monumental that planning a wedding feels like a piece of cake in comparison. And that's only some of it.

I continually contemplate the question, “How else can I help ease the burden, lighten the load, honor the work, and sing the praises of hardworking, dedicated, and passionate educators beyond what I provide during my professional development training?”

I now have the answer.

What Self-Care Is

I believe, in my heart of hearts, that the key to thriving—as both a human being and an educator—rests in self-care. To be clear, that is *daily* self-care, not the kind we promise to do during the summer or on the weekends, or when our own children are older, or when we retire. Yes, *daily*. Psychologist Catherine

P. Cook-Cottone (2015) defines *self-care* as the “daily process of being aware of and attending to one’s basic physiological and emotional needs including the shaping of one’s daily routine, relationships, and environment” (p. 297). These include small tweaks, reminders, and (perhaps most important) *permission* for educators to take care of themselves.

Educators read lots of books and engage in lots of professional development for the sake of student achievement, and they should continue doing so. However, I propose a radical shift in thinking. What if teachers learn to take care of themselves *while* taking care of their students? What if it weren’t an either-or situation? What if you split your time between your own and students’ needs in a new way? What if, for every move you make for the sake of your students, you also make a move for your own sake? What if you not only engaged in professional development on pedagogy and content, but also spent time learning how to best support yourself?

On average, I travel by airplane at least twice a week to work with educators all over the United States and I hear this line during the safety demonstration on every single flight, no matter the airline: “Secure your own oxygen mask before assisting others.” This is the essence of what I’m talking about. All human beings—particularly parents, public servants, and caregivers—must take care of themselves before they can take care of others. In this incredibly demanding, often thankless, vocation, how can we expect educators to take care of students if they are not caring for themselves first? Here’s what I know to be true above all else for educators: *research-based educational strategies and pedagogy are only as good as the person providing them*. And if the human providing the strategies is so depleted, worn out, and burned out that he or she can hardly breathe, then the expectation that he or she can provide oxygen to students is unrealistic. And yet this is what we are asking educators to do, day in and day out. So many are struggling to stay afloat, without the tools to learn how to properly thrive.

My goal is to help you create rituals, routines, procedures, habits, and mind shifts. This book presents *reminders* of ways to take care of yourself—about how getting enough sleep is an essential part of being an effective educator, as is pausing to take three deep breaths at various points throughout the day. It’s about giving

yourself permission to *be imperfect*. Educators know these things, but along your teaching (and life) journeys, you might have chosen students over yourself so many times that you've forgotten what it means to engage in consistent self-care without guilt. It's time to ditch the guilt.

You're overdue to take time for you.

What You Can Find in This Book

To begin, you'll gather some baseline data using two essential forms in chapter 1: a "Self-Care Survey: Starting Point" and a "Daily Time Audit: Starting Point." It's important to complete both so you know where you currently are. No matter what your initial results reveal, if you're willing to commit to this book's self-care practices, I promise you'll recognize a substantial improvement in well-being when you return to these same forms in the epilogue.

For the framework, I use Abraham H. Maslow's (1943, 1971) easily recognized and well-established theory of motivation. I present the framework as a ladder (instead of the more common pyramid), so you can visualize yourself climbing as you learn how to take exquisite care of yourself. As poet Jalaluddin Rumi (n.d.) suggests, "Be a lamp, or a lifeboat, or a ladder." Let this book be your ladder.

In each chapter, I'll help you become aware of when your needs aren't met and share specific strategies to help put you solidly on that particular level. After fully understanding the framework itself (chapter 1), you'll start at the ladder's first rung, where you'll get back to your body's basics—your physiological needs (chapter 2). You will write a personalized action plan for this first level and, after trying it for one week, reflect on how things went. From there you'll follow the same process and move up the ladder to safety needs (chapter 3), belonging needs (chapter 4), and esteem needs (chapter 5). After you stabilize the first four rungs, you'll move to the top two levels—self-actualization (chapter 6) and transcendence (chapter 7)—where personal growth occurs so you can move from merely surviving to truly thriving. Last, as stated in "Epilogue: Final Thoughts," you'll revisit the "Self-Care Survey" and "Daily Time Audit" so you can celebrate your growth and reflect on your progress.

Who Can Use This Book

This book is truly for *all* educators, not just teachers. That being said, it's important to note that this book also works for *everyone*, not just educators. Consider whether your noneducator family and friends could benefit from a dedicated focus on self-care. (I'm guessing they can.) While I provide examples that will appeal to educators, the framework and the action plans work for everyone.

You may choose to work with an accountability group or partner if that's helpful to you. The options are endless here. Perhaps your professional learning community, department, or grade-level team wants to do this work together; maybe you and a colleague decide to support each other; or perhaps you and your mentor or instructional coach want to work side by side. I've included guidance for groups and pairs in each chapter.

How You Can Use This Book

This isn't a traditional book that you will sit down and barrel through. Instead, this text is for savoring; it serves as both your guide and your anchor. It should start to look rugged from the time you spend reading and writing in it. You'll take it to school, then home, and then back to school.

Work through the chapters consecutively. You may end up spending more time with some chapters than others, depending on your starting results. For example, if your level one needs are fairly solid, you may spend less time there than you will on the following chapters. On the other hand, “a person who is lacking food, safety, love [belonging], and esteem”—consecutive crucial elements of the first four need levels—“would most probably hunger for food more strongly than for anything else” (Maslow, 2000, p. 254).

Don't skip chapters, as each level builds on the previous one. Commit to following your action plan for one week, and then return to the book for reflection and next steps. You might need an additional week with the same action plan, or you might want to stay at the same level but create a different plan, or you might be ready to move on to the next level. This is *your* guide, so you are free (and encouraged) to move at your own pace. There is space for you to write directly in the book so it is easy to dig into the work

without the added distraction of a separate notebook. (Of course, you may use your own journal or digital space for action planning and reflections if that is your preference.)

It is essential that you do the work. Simply reading about the levels and strategies will *not* improve your life. Set a clear intention and commit to this journey. It may take you a few weeks or a few months to complete the book. Either way, doing the work is the most important part. This work is messy. There will be weeks you won't engage as much as you'd like, and that's OK. Don't let a desire to be perfect stop you from picking yourself back up and jumping back in at any point.

Your Pre-Engagement

Congratulations—your journey to your improved life begins today! Thank you for joining me in this work and for giving yourself this gift. Rather than trying to engage with this content perfectly, plan for possible failure so you can *avoid* it. To help do that, respond to the following questions.

Why do you have this book in your hands right now? What is your greatest hope for doing this work?

.....

.....

What will prevent you from engaging in this work? (Examples include getting sick, your children getting sick, feeling too overwhelmed to spend time on it, and comparing yourself to others and feeling you're not doing it right.)

.....

.....

Now that you've identified why you might struggle, how can you overcome these obstacles? Why will this time be different? What is your plan for sidestepping your usual challenges and frustrations?

.....

.....