

BUILDING RESILIENCY

by Carmen Meehan

Graphics by Eileen Anderson

TIQ - Teacher Innocence Quotient refers to the need to lose one's innocence about the grinding nature of the work and to actively practice resiliency development.

Adapted from *The Resilient Practitioner*, T. Skovholt.

Over forty years ago a pioneer researcher in body-mind medicine, H. Selye, coined the term altruistic egotism. His idea was to highlight the need for those in helping professions to be concerned with the welfare of self. Many teachers struggle with feelings of selfishness or self-indulgence when they think of taking time for themselves. Self-care is not selfish. Rather, it is absolutely necessary if one is to function effectively in this decades-long career. The TIQ (Teacher Innocence Quotient) describes the belief by teachers that they can escape burnout effects without active prevention efforts. To ignore the warning signs of stress and depletion that our body sends us can be tempting but it is really only a short-term solution.

SELF CARE STRATEGIES:

(Adapted from *The Resilient Practitioner*, T. Skovholt)

NURTURING THE EMOTIONAL SELF

A concept most helpful in caring for the emotional self is developing practices that help to foster self-compassion. Kirsten Neff, a self-compassion researcher, describes it as "being kind and understanding toward oneself in instances of pain or failure rather than being harshly self-critical..."

NURTURING THE HUMOROUS SELF

Laughter promotes positivity. Do you take time to engage in activities that usually involve laughter? Do you make it a point to be around people that are funny or people that have the ability to bring out the "funny" in you?

NURTURING THE LOVING SELF

Develop strong personal relationships outside work with people who lift you up, rather than bring you down. A personal support network of family and friends can be a powerful source of professional vitality when one is experiencing significant work-related stress.

NURTURING THE PLAYFUL SELF

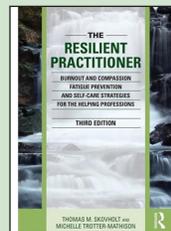
The world of play helps with the work/life balance. Take an inventory of your playtime. Is it there or does it need to be added?

NURTURING THE NUTRITIOUS SELF

Healthy foods fuel our bodies while unhealthy foods drain our energy levels. Healthy eating is not always cheap and convenient but it does have significant positive impact on your health.

WIN A BOOK!

We are giving away a copy of *The Resilient Practitioner*.



While this book is for all those in the helping professions, it especially speaks to teachers. Included in it is the Skovholt Resiliency and Self-Care Inventory as well as self-reflection exercises at the end of each chapter.

To qualify for the draw, go to our website www.teacherwellness.ca and go to the "Comments" section. Share with us some examples of how you nurture yourself to build resiliency.

On **February 23**, we will do the draw from all submissions.

NURTURING THE PHYSICAL SELF

Exercise has so many benefits in combating depression and improving brain chemistry. Find a form of exercise or activity that you enjoy, practice it three to five times a week for 20 to 60 minutes and you will feel a positive shift in your mood.

NURTURING THE PRIORITY-SETTING SELF

There is always too much to do. Our time is a precious commodity so it is important that we set our priorities, set our boundaries and manage our time. This can be our biggest challenge especially at work as we are often called upon to do more and more. Each day/week identify and prioritize your tasks. Time management always seems to be a work in progress.

NURTURING THE RELAXATION-STRESS REDUCTION SELF

Taking just 5 minutes a day to breathe and relax can contribute to stress reduction. Harvard professor, Herbert Benson, suggests doing the "Relaxation Response". Try this short, yet effective version of this exercise:

Along with slow, deep breathing:

1. Repeat a word, sound, prayer, thought, phrase or muscular activity.
2. Return to number 1 whenever other thoughts intrude.

NURTURING THE SOLITARY SELF

Giving ourselves permission for some real solitude time can be challenging. The benefits are very much worth it so this time could be something you make a priority. Doing the 5-minute relaxation exercise described above is one way to experience solitude.