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## AVOIDING EDUCATOR BURNOUT: USING MINDFULNESS TO EMBODY TEACHER VALUES

Ami Amero

Lesley University, aamero@lesley.edu

Ami Amero

Forest Hills High School, Ami.Amero@sad12.org

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**AVOIDING EDUCATOR BURNOUT: USING MINDFULNESS TO EMBODY  
TEACHER VALUES**

**Ami Amero**

**Mindfulness Studies, Lesley University**

**September, 2022**

**Dr. Melissa Jean & Dr. Andrew Olendzki**

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this creative thesis is to explore applying mindfulness into an educator's lesson planning process through identifying a teacher's core values. It is important not only because of the scarcity of current research on said topic, but findings show there is a strong case that can be made regarding alleviating educator burnout. The suggestion(s) provided in the creative thesis are geared towards teachers already well-versed in a mindfulness practice and looking to take their experience further in a professional setting. Additionally, the sessions cater to educators who may not have much (if any) autonomy in their classroom and feel as though their "hands are tied" with regards to mandated curricula. Since mindfulness is rooted in Buddhist theory and therefore may raise some separation-of-church-and-state concerns, this creative thesis has taken careful steps to employ secular language instead, making these professional development offerings appropriate to be presented in the public-school setting.

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### **Avoiding Educator Burnout: Using Mindfulness to Embody Teacher Values**

Teaching is regarded as being one of the most rewarding yet stressful professions. Teacher burnout and exhaustion are chronic issues that afflict this vocation, resulting in negative outcomes for educators. Burnout can undermine the quality of teachers' performance; more specifically, research has shown that teachers who experience significant job-related stress are likely to exhibit social, emotional, and behavioral problems that interfere with their effectiveness in the classroom (Cook et al., 2017). In addition, data collected over several decades have revealed that teacher attrition occurs at an alarming rate, with 40% to 50% of new teachers leaving the field within their first five years (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). Moreover, the findings also indicate that those teachers who stay in the profession are disengaged and have diminished levels of resilience (Gu & Day, 2013).

What if educators were to bring mindfulness into their lesson planning process, harnessing inner wisdom to develop a more intrinsic/bodily approach in their classroom? Using ancient and current philosophical perspectives to explore a more contemplative pedagogical method and applying it to a teacher's professional work context would open up new experiences of visceral/intuitive responses to life in the classroom. Which would in turn involve teachers becoming more embodied, balanced, and present during their stress-filled work days.

The structure of this creative thesis focuses on the aspect of lesson planning since that is a task that can be completed alone/individually by teachers and requires no additional collaborative effort from others. Also, many teachers have their hands-tied—having to use a district-mandated curriculum—which may be a source of disappointment/disengagement for educators, thus leading to an “auto-pilot” syndrome and/or resulting in warning signs of burnout. Using mindfulness as one technique to work with one's own values as a teacher—in spite of the

daily challenges and stressors—provides an opportunity for neuroplasticity to occur. Stopping the auto-pilot syndrome through brain wiring involves a number of phenomena that balance the changes in neural activity over a wide range of temporal and spatial scales (synaptic scaling) (Turrigiano, 2012). Cognitive training in mindfulness to combat auto-pilot is based on current understandings of brain plasticity and how the brain modifies its activity and recovers from lack of clarity, feelings of mental disconnection, and cognitive dysfunction (Mateos-Aparicio & Rodriguez-Moreno, 2019).

### **Positionality Statement**

As the author of this creative thesis, I acknowledge my standpoint as a public-school teacher living in rural Maine with twenty-five years of experience in the 9-12 classroom and culminating this work because of the practices I have observed of both myself and others in educator approaches regarding lesson planning. After a recent somatic experience in designing instruction, I became intrigued by the use of mindfulness and how it might help many educators to become more embodied with their teaching; I recognize that positionality influenced this project to some extent. Thus, these findings are offered as only one possible interpretation of my personal experiences based on my standpoint as a middle-aged, public high-school teacher in an extremely small, blue-collar community in Northern rural Maine. Additionally, the use of “I” will indicate myself and the pronouns “we”, “us”, and “ours” will refer to a general collective group of teachers (with the understanding of the complexity in the use of “we” that my individual experiences may not be the same as many others).

### **Contextual Background for Thesis Conception**

I have never been a huge fan of assigning worksheets in my classroom nor the feeling of “rote-ness” that seems to accompany this type of menial task; rather I choose to create tasks that

have strong elements of one of the fourteen Complex Reasoning Processes (Marazano et al., 1997). However, I had a personal experience that became the very catalyst for the idea of this creative thesis. In addition to my full-time teaching job (60+ hours per week) and the pursuit of my Master's Degree (taking on two courses during one particular semester), mid-terms were due for both graduate classes—and since my professional commitments took precedent—I was finding it particularly challenging to time manage the work-life balance ratio. One day, in an effort to use class time as a “quiet day” for myself—so that I might chip away and catch up on submission deadlines—I arranged for all my history classes to complete a set of worksheets. While preparing the afternoon before and photocopying each period's packet, the emergence of mindfulness resulted in strong sensations of inner awareness. In pausing to notice and observe the phenomena, I was struck with what a profound negative message my body was sending me. Something inside me inherently knew that there was a disconnect between my actions and my values as an educator which manifested with adverse physiological symptoms (tightness of jaw, stomach twinge/pang, etc.). The train of thought then became: I wonder if there is a way to teach other educators how to pay attention of how it feels when they go about their lesson planning?, Are they able to create lessons that embody and resonate with their own personal values?, Does this type of professional instruction for teachers even exist?, and Does our current national model of education contribute to and/or create the very environment of auto-pilot syndrome that teachers endure?

### **Review of Literature**

Teaching is often viewed as a noble profession, making contributions and having meaningful impacts in the lives of others, giving selflessly of one's time and energies for everyone else, and has its own rewards beyond those of a mere paycheck. As Siampani (2021)

explains, teachers are the ones who parents leave their children with and spend more than a quarter of their day being with students, exhausting themselves by giving a lot of energy to educate future citizens.

The sense of contributing something, of creating, of helping others, of putting knowledge and skills to work, can certainly help educators feel a part of something bigger. However, because of the amount of stress within a teacher's workday, it is sometimes impossible to see one's own work in this way and that which educators otherwise would consider worth working for becomes intolerable under difficult circumstances. Kabat-Zinn (2013) more commonly refers to this concept as "work stress", and in fact some doctors believe that this has become a fundamental cause of many of our modern-day diseases. Some studies show that in jobs that have little decision-making latitude but high standards of performance, there is a higher prevalence of heart attacks than those in jobs with more control and autonomy. Other ailments common among educators are reports of palpitations, nervous stomach, headache, and insomnia (Watt, 2021). It is often tough for teachers to accept and label these symptoms as stress-related because it is inconsistent with the roles and image of an educator. Plus, teacher exhaustion and stress have often been dismissed through the ages as signs of weakness and an inability to cope with the demands of the job and therefore the burden usually falls to educators to individually deal with whatever is "dragging them down", which is easier said than done, especially if what is dragging them down is beyond their control to enact real change (Brown & Pratt-Ronco, 2021).

Many American schools could fit Kabat-Zinn's criteria of *Type-A Syndrome*; the constant pressures school districts face of standardized testing, entire school systems are driven by a sense of pressure to continually speed up the instruction of academics with the sole intention to boost results of annual yearly progress assessments. Since the federal and state governments set



guidelines and are the ones that determine “what matters,” success is largely measured by a standardization process. This type of reporting has created high-stakes accountability and has produced a noticeable shift in school environment—the focus of classrooms being results-driven—leaving little to no room for teacher autonomy with respect to curriculum, which leads to a situation that gradually progresses from auto-pilot syndrome to one of burnout.

With that said, time spent on professional development for the sole purpose of a teacher’s inner landscape—listening to sensation responses felt internally—can be perceived as taking time away from what are deemed core academic priorities. However, since targets and outcomes are an unavoidable feature of school life, mindfulness practices would provide networks of support to promote teachers’ overall wellness and assist in improving their capacities for reflective practice instead of resulting in situations that have been described as highly competitive, cynical, and hostile (Wyness & Lang, 2016, citing Fielding, p. 1043).

### **Teacher Burnout**

In psychology, there are two popular conceptions: hedonic and eudemonic (Vinney, 2021). Hedonic are experiences of pleasure and enjoyment while eudemonic are experiences of meaning and purpose and identified as being needed to contribute to overall well-being (i.e. avoid burnout for educators). Vinney (2021) further indicates some of the constructs used to measure eudemonic self-actualization: autonomy, personal growth, purpose in life, self-acceptance, and mastery. Eudaimonia dates back to the fourth century B.C., when Aristotle first proposed it in his work, *Nicomachean Ethics*. According to Aristotle, one should live their life in accordance with their virtues/values. He claimed people are constantly striving to meet their potential and be their best selves, which leads to greater purpose and meaning (Joseph, 2019). A number of philosophers aligned themselves with the eudemonic perspective including Plato,

Marcus Aurelius, and Kant. Psychological theories like Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs*—which points to self-actualization as the highest goal in life—champion a eudemonic perspective on human flourishing.

By defining subjective well-being as a combination of how much one appreciates and is satisfied with their life and examining national statistics in the category of educator burnout—teachers in grades K-12 are more burned out than workers in any other industry, according to a recent Gallup poll (Marken & Agrawal, 2022) that finds 44% of K-12 employees in the United States report “always” or “very often” feeling burned out at work. That number climbs to 52% when looking just at teachers (Inglis, 2022)—the case can be made that the eudemonic behavior in taking a mindful approach toward lesson planning could potentially lead to greater meaning in a teacher’s professional life and result in more experiences of elevation. Furthermore, burnout rates become a more sobering point when discussion of teacher attrition is introduced to the conversation as recent data shows fifty percent leave the field after only five years (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2017). Moreover, not only do colleagues talk about leaving the profession—a plurality report to have actually done so—but that they would not recommend this profession to a loved one, and that teaching has become a less appealing career choice. Additionally, UNESCO predicts a shortage of 69 million teachers world-wide by 2030 (Doucet et al., 2018).

Psychologist Sonya Lyubomirsky (2008) has outlined the three components that contribute to an individual’s happiness “set point” and how much each matter. According to her calculations, 40% of one’s happiness set point is under their control. This is a promising statistic regarding teacher burnout and bodes well for the presentation of this thesis—bringing mindfulness practices into the initial lesson planning process—having potential to help overcome

almost half of what may be contributing to an educator's symptoms of burnout. Meaningful activities like this require greater thought and become more effective over time.

Volatility. Uncertainty. Complexity. Ambiguity. These four words (shorthand to VUCA) describe the type of high-stress, high-demand scenarios that can rapidly degrade one of the most powerful and influential brain systems, our attention (Jha, 2020). When the brain reacts, mindfulness can help a person not only survive, but also thrive. If the brain is not fully processing information, it leaves one feeling overloaded and incapable of functioning effectively. Much of a person's vulnerable and limited attentional resources are spent policing instincts and behaviors as well as overcoming impulses and habits. With mindfulness practice, mental foginess begins to fade; as attention and working memory are protected and strengthened, a sense of clarity and well-being helps one to bounce back.

### **The Current School Model**

Eighty-two percent of state legislatures have officially adopted the academic guidelines and requirement benchmarks published by the *Common Core State Standards Initiative* group (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Learning must adhere to policy frameworks where student outcomes are measured and teaching performances assessed; influenced by our nation's Industrial Age educational heritage, this persistent view has the current model looking similar to that of one hundred years ago (i.e., the factory model, Carnegie Unit, etc.). Stressing the importance of performativity, namely that everything is evaluated according to easily measured and therefore predictable outcomes, this is a society dominated by private enterprise and competitive markets (Tomlinson, 2001). In the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and other developed

economies, the commodification and marketization of education has been built on emphasizing the efficiency of market competition (Leather et al., 2021).

With education being outcomes-oriented and reinforced by a broader culture of blame and holding individuals culpable, the adage of *what gets assessed gets attention*—otherwise referred to as “teaching to the test”—holds true and has become the attitude of many modern public-school classrooms. The pressure to be a “high performing” school has been described in a critique by Michael Fielding, professor in the School of Education at The Center for Educational Innovation, University of Sussex as:

the personal is used for the sake of the functional; students are included or excluded, valued or not, primarily on the basis of whether they contribute to organizational performance of the school. The pressure they and their teachers are put under to raise standards and improve performance marginalizes the very education aspirations that give schooling its justification and its purpose. Students complain that schools do not care about them as persons, but only about them as bearers of results and measurable outcomes are now ubiquitous. The same is true of teachers. (Wyness & Lang, 2016, citing Fielding, p. 1043)

Paulo Freire (1970) was a Brazilian educator who developed the theory of critical consciousness (a process known in Portuguese as *conscientização*) and used the analogy of banking regarding our current state of schools—making mindless deposit after mindless deposit—and having said deposits be one-sided and rather passive. Oppressors in education promote memorizing, and more rote methods versus creativity and critical thinking. In studying the history of schools over the length of his career, it was his assertion that society prefers a teacher-centered model for many reasons, one being that it is easier. Freire’s banking method of

contemporary schooling that he identified rejects conscious cognition and prefers transferals of information; merely seeing people as objects—each one an empty account to be filled by the content of whatever is demanded—attempting to control/limit thinking and action. However, this should give educators reason to pause and consider: should it not be the role of the educator to reject the socially accepted “banking” model and become more actively engaged in the process of embodying intention/awareness with the attempt of self-reflection? Yet, the current model of American schools has the appearance of being geared towards situations of auto-pilot syndrome in the classroom and progressing to result in effects of burnout.

### **Avoiding Auto Pilot**

Whether it be for reasons regarding logistics, finance and budget, or strong political leanings of local School Boards, many American school districts have implemented policies surrounding mandated curriculum, meaning the content taught, the materials approved for use, and the skills the school district expects students to acquire has been pre-determined; strictly outlining what that classroom teacher has been directed to teach and how the educator is to deliver said instruction (Amatullah et al., 2020). The more colloquial term—albeit with a negative connotation—among frustrated educators is “canned curriculum” (Teague-Bowling, 2015). The following excerpt gives a glimpse as to what this entails:

...being forced to follow a pacing guide, being reprimanded if I wasn't on the same page as the other teachers, making photocopies of worksheets, and being bored out of my mind while I read a script to my students...I did not spend precious years of my life engaged in deeply understanding the world and its complexities to be told by a set of unknown individuals working at a corporate firm what to teach and how to teach it. (Rankine-Landers, 2019)

With regards to school districts that choose this type of pedagogical approach, due to the rote-ness of said method, more often-than-not, these not only encourage mindlessness, but have teachers citing feelings of disengagement, boredom and decreased sense of accomplishment (Lohrenz, 2021), which are also several of the symptoms listed by the Mayo Clinic (2021) for burnout. Thus, why this creative thesis suggests that educators might be interested in pursuing a mindful lesson planning practice approach.

Mindfulness is a flexible state of mind in which we are actively engaged in the present, noticing new things and sensitive to context. When we are in a state of mindlessness (auto-pilot), we act like automatons who have been programmed to act according to the sense our behavior made in the past, rather than the present. We spend much more time not there than we know and the consequences for us are real and often profound. Reports show that 47% of the time our minds wander (Killingsworth, 2011).

For example, most of us have had the experience of driving a familiar route so often that the car seems to get to the destination by itself without any active intervention by us. If we process it without questioning alternative ways the information/material could be understood, we take it in mindlessly and it will not occur to us to reconsider it. Incorporating mindfulness into lesson planning results in an increase in positive affect, a decrease in stress, and an increase in health and longevity to name a few of the benefits (Langer, 2000).

It is not uncommon for us to operate at work the same way we do at other times in our lives—namely on automatic pilot—as we have seen, the automatic pilot mode may get us through our school day, but it will not help with feeling worn down by the pressure, the routine, the sameness of what we are doing; however, we may not be as stuck as we think. Work stress can be greatly reduced in many cases simply by an intentional commitment to cultivate

awareness in the domain of work and by letting mindfulness guide our actions and responses. What we do know is that clarity of vision provides fresh insights as to what might be possible (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Bringing this practice forward can make for major improvements in the quality of the educator's life at work; teachers do not have to quit the profession to start to change in positive ways. Simply deciding to approach lesson planning as a meditation practice can shift the balance from a sense of being "done in" by the job to a sense of knowing what you are doing and choosing to do it; this can become a vehicle that educators purposefully use to learn and grow. When mindfulness is introduced as the thread guiding and seeing one's actions of lesson planning from moment-to-moment, it becomes something the educator is choosing to do every day in a way that goes beyond the necessity of going through the motions. Instead of having the curriculum dictated and running one's life in the classroom completely, the teacher is now in a position to be in greater balance.

According to Dr. Charles Scott (2022), Faculty of Education: Contemplative Inquiry & Approaches at Simon Fraser University, the issue of mandated curriculum plaguing school districts across America leaving teachers with little to no autonomy and thus, contributing to auto-pilot syndrome in our nation's schools is a systemic problem and will need to be addressed in other ways. For the time being, the creative thesis of merging value congruence and mindfulness with a teacher's lesson planning process will help educators to cope with the current situation.

The goal is to have educators asking themselves: *what is the intention with lesson x?*, and *how do I feel when delivering the lesson/administering the homework assignment?* before going full steam ahead and through the proverbial motions in rote-fashion. Taking steps to help

teachers better navigate the busy, demanding, fast-paced world of education, so what we teach may be far less important than how we teach (or even why we teach).

### **Effects on Physical, Mental and Emotional Health**

One of the health effects is in the science of psychoneuroimmunology. Studies in this area examine how what one thinks about influences the immune system. Basically, stress and worry are the enemy of a body's optimally functioning natural defense system and as Paliliunas et al. (2022) states, can lead to physical ailments such as anxiety, depression, headaches, nausea, interruption in sleep patterns, frequent colds and infections, skin irritations, upset stomach (or other digestive issues), heart problems, and pneumonia.

The signs and symptoms of burnout and the potential emotional effects of irritation, over/under-eating, difficulty falling asleep and/or staying asleep, diminished joy toward things once enjoyed, diminished feelings of satisfaction/personal accomplishment, and feelings of hopelessness associated with their work and/or students can impact a teacher's professional performance and function as well as experience other side effects such as frustration, absenteeism, exhaustion, having a negative perception, low motivation and lack of flexibility (American Counseling Association Traumatology Interest Network, n.d.). Moreover, when compared with the general population, Cook et al. (2017) point out that teachers are at greater risk of experiencing psychological burnout, depression, physical health problems and job dissatisfaction; all of which can be precipitating factors for leaving the profession.

Since burnout is generally something that happens over time and gradually builds up, part of the problem is that educators may not realize that they are experiencing burnout until it becomes too late and if ignored for too long, it is liable to take it out on the body. For instance, it is possible to pull muscles in the neck and back all because one is experiencing this type of



stress. Some of the more subtle signs would be if a teacher has difficulty leaving work at the end of the day (noticing they can never leave on time) or an increased need to control events, not taking breaks (i.e. eating on the run). These are all normal responses to the challenging nature of the teaching profession—burnout is an occupational hazard—however, the stress must be managed in a healthy way in order for teachers to be effective in their work.

Furthermore, in addition to the exponential increase in current teacher burnout and the exodus of those leaving the profession, there is another concerning trend being observed with preservice teacher burnout as well, and in turn, there is little to no instruction provided in teacher education programs on how to utilize personal resources and strategies to buffer against the associated stress (Miller & Flint-Stipp, 2019). Within teacher preparation programs, there is a lack of emphasis on promoting teacher well-being, and very few (if any) programs have been developed to specifically address this critical issue. In fact, in a cursory review of the top teacher preparation programs in the country, none of them included a course on teacher well-being, stress management, or resilience (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Not only is this focus essential as a retention strategy designed to retain highly skilled teachers in the profession, but could also enable teachers to promote their own resiliency. The lack of resiliency training for student teachers-in-training is resulting in many rethinking their career choice and opting to leave the profession for a completely different career path altogether.

### **A Teacher's Inner Landscape**

Parker Palmer (1997) presents his education philosophy regarding the inner landscape of teachers in that *we teach who we are*; meaning it is impossible for educators to not project their inwardness while teaching (delivering direct instruction, lecturing, presenting lessons, working with students, etc.). Going further with his concept, if an educator's inner landscape is left

unattended intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually, it will affect a teacher's content, instruction, and relationships. As he states, "the most practical thing we can achieve in any kind of work is insight (i.e. mindfulness) as to what is happening inside us as we do it." The more familiar we are with our inner terrain, the more sure-footed our teaching becomes. With this said, there is potential to turn the lesson planning process into an inner-directed activity. Using an educator's authentic self to create learning opportunities is important since authenticity is at the heart of learning (Beames & Brown, 2016).

Helping teachers with the challenge of learning from their own practice has long been a goal of educators, administrators, and district staff development personnel for many years. Harris & Anthony (2001) claim that attempts to promote ongoing teacher learning usually involve training teachers to use a particular method or a set of techniques (often in one-shot workshops that are notoriously unpopular with teachers and generally ineffective in promoting substantive change in their practices). Teaching depends on growth and development and is practiced in dynamic situations that are never twice the same.

Contemplation has shown to benefit performance, character development, and insight. Learning to be aware of such sensations and feelings begins to create interior space. Cultivating awareness of inner intelligence is a significant skill for educators to learn and demands a much more focused reflective practice than it does to passively deliver district-mandated lessons in rote-fashion. In a profession where many are conditioned by a culture where deep inward listening is not considered an important or useful form of reflective practice, contemplation takes time to stop and dwell on questions, ideas, methods, and personal experience. Thus, creating a different classroom culture from what teachers and educators may be accustomed to (Brady,

2007). Doucet et al. (2018) is of the mindset that schools should be as concerned about the overall (holistic) education of our teachers as we are about our students.

Quantitative data (scores) are no doubt important, but there needs to be a holistic balance which is why this creative thesis suggests implementing a mindfulness practice using the lesson planning process (with a focus on values congruence) would benefit in fighting the auto-pilot syndrome as well as burnout; locating the individual teacher's inner landscape as the site of change.

### **Discussion**

Instead of schools continuing to look through an external lens to modify and change aspects in their districts (i.e., implementing a new set of curricula, replacing building administration (and/or) faculty/staff, instituting smaller class sizes, generating more parental involvement, etc.), incorporating mindfulness into teachers' lesson planning process might be a better experience that could be of great benefit; administering new perspective to educational leadership. Because education systems have tended to focus on other things (i.e. how do we raise math scores?, boost attendance?, decrease detentions?, why was today's spelling lesson not successful?, etc.), many teaching models have ignored the value of personal/inner contemplation. The reality is that people have a set of multiple intelligences and therefore learn and gain wisdom in a variety of ways. By using mindfulness to focus on embodying educator values is one way teachers can construct meaning and intra-subjective ways of "knowing." When teachers lose touch with these, they become disconnected; a teacher's inner life should not be divorced from their outer life; mind-intelligence and heart-wisdom should function as an interdependent dynamic. Embracing this model cultivates awareness of both thinking/concentration as well as sentiment/spirit and can awaken passion within educators (Doetzel, 2014).

Because the vision for this creative thesis is inherent and latent, it is not easily able to be defined or taught in traditional ways, thus it needs to be evoked and uncovered from within (much like a light switch that needs to be turned on). The process of pedagogical contemplation creates an awareness of the tacit nature that makes it difficult to articulate in words or encompass within conventional educational organizations/models.

### **Value Congruence**

As educators, we cannot always change the circumstances that cause us stress. Limitations and challenges constantly exist—as educators we are expected to be “all things to all people”—and more often than not, much of it is out of our control or we are not in a position to immediately affect change.

Value congruence refers to the extent to which personal values are in accordance with the surroundings (Simmons, 2010) and the extent to which an individual can behave at work being consistent with their own self-image. It is very difficult to experience meaningfulness in work life if we are expected to behave in ways that are inconsistent with the highest values we espouse to ourselves and others. Once educators define their personal values, it is surmised that mindfulness can then be introduced as a vehicle to assist with stress management (burnout) and create resiliency; the antithesis of burnout is resilience (Faigin, 2022). Similar to organizational culture for businesses and companies—mission statements, objectives, expectations and values (Indeed.com, 2022)—the same tenets would guide educators with the proposed workshop series defining what is most important to them regarding the confines of their individual classrooms.

By taking small steps, educators can eventually fight premature burnout by altering their states of mindful awareness. This concept is referred to as *psychological flexibility* and encompasses openness and the ability to adapt thoughts and behaviors to better align with one's

values and goals (Hayes et al., 2006). In simpler terms, psychological flexibility consists of engaging in skillful behavior in the presence of aversive experiences, especially those beyond our control. Through the workshop series proposed in this creative thesis, the intention/goal is to have teachers recognize that it is counterproductive to try to control our experiences (especially when so much of our daily teaching is out of our power to do so) and suppressing feelings will ultimately only lead to more distress (Psychology Today, 2022).

### **Personal Agency**

For teachers who must use a mandated curriculum set forth by their local School Board, and therefore may not have as much autonomy as one would like in the classroom, the idea of exerting individual agency allows an educator some flexibility. Even if one is contractually obligated to follow a set pedagogical model, the teacher can still participate in taking a mindful approach for value congruence practice through their lesson planning.

Reflective practice should not be viewed as a noun, but rather a verb, working on one's own self-awareness as an educator. Even when there may be external forces working against individual endeavors or teachers feel as though they do not have control of their current circumstances, there is a hidden assumption that there must be a collective solution in order to solve the problem; yet what is being proposed is a very individualized practice that can happen on a daily basis, or as frequently as the teacher wishes (White, 2022).

In general, the old Carnegie Unit/Industrial Era “factory model” of education no longer resonates in contemporary society, yet a lion's share of America's school districts—at their core—still operate this way. Taking on the nation's entire education system (which some see as a major social problem) is a tall order and has very little chance at true reform and revolutionary change. Instead, it would be more manageable on an individual level to counter high pressure

and deal with stressors by taking a small step with exerting personal agency.

Sometimes stress can be greatly minimized when we give up the fight and trust the process. When we feel we need to struggle against something that may not necessarily be changeable, we can feel overwhelmed with a virtually impossible task. Conversely, when we accept a situation and let go of our own need to control it, this can feel like lifting a weight off our shoulders and can greatly relieve the stress of whatever situation we face (Glasofer, n.d.).

### **Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is the awareness that arises through intentionally attending in an open accepting and discerning way to whatever is arising in the present moment (Shapiro, 2009). It teaches us to observe internal and external phenomena to help build understanding and resilience of mind, and to overcome distress and suffering (Feldman & Kuyken, 2019). One of the goals of mindfulness is to train the mind to develop the abilities to skillfully navigate the full spectrum of one's experience. Exploring mindfully means searching within ourselves with the intention to accept what is, because as any seasoned educator knows, some teaching days are better than others. Mindfulness is most useful in helping to stay mentally balanced through the rollercoaster of stress, helping the teacher to not only remain in the present but also in accepting and letting go of whatever may be happening in the current moment.

With that said, the general "umbrella" of mindfulness can be broken down even further for educators into categories of *thick* vs. *thin*. McCaw (2020) defines thin mindfulness as the concept configured around individual self-improvement (i.e., teacher professional development courses to teach mindfulness to students), whereas thick mindfulness is designated and conceived around transformation and meaning making (i.e. eudemonic behavior). Without careful consideration, the uses of mindfulness within education risk remaining muddled and

misunderstood. Thick notions go far beyond a mental training regimen designed to improve individual wellbeing and include more insightful self-regulation activities such as monitoring, identifying, responding to the feedback in one's body, and evaluating the effectiveness of one's actions (of which a value congruence practice would qualify since the practitioner is looking to turn inward and explore if their values match the sensory/somatic experience taking place) (Faigin, 2022). Thick mindfulness practices are emphasized in this creative thesis due to their practicality and ability to lead to insight, understanding, and wisdom about our inner phenomena. They are inherently helpful because understanding our human nature is the key to all forms of human healing and mindfulness can be a practical and useful tool for this investigation (Olendzki, 2010).

Focusing on the present moment would be a crucial foundation in the overall method. The central aim is placed on becoming acquainted with sensory experiences moment-to-moment while the teacher is engaged in their lesson planning, with an emphasis resting on identifying an educator's value-driven behavior. Rather than trying to alter or eliminate negative thoughts, individuals should work on changing the impact of thoughts by changing the mental context in which they occur (Luoma et al., 2007). This method is exemplified through its illumination of values. The identification of personal values helps the individual connect problems and uncontrollable events to their personal—or in the educator's case, professional—values. This value-centered mindset promotes positive outcomes as opposed to covering up negative thoughts (Harris, 2008).

Using contemplative practice as a pedagogical method toward lesson planning would allow educators to see with more clarity their core values, habits and tendencies of mind. Understanding these processes becomes essential in the process of teaching as it aids in

developing the qualities of mind that are necessary to overcome and endure the constant stressors and frustrations throughout the school day. Applying mindfulness practice to a teacher's lesson planning process can help make better sense of an educator's reality. As stated by Olendzki (2016), "it teaches us to disengage and disidentify with all experiences, helping us not to favor or oppose all that feels pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral."

When teachers are given the opportunity to pay close attention to their attitudes regarding experiences in the classroom, this strengthens the capacity to flourish, and helps build resiliency. The roadblocks educators encounter represent the inner as well as the outer terrain that teachers must traverse in pursuit of their work. Mindfulness assists in enlarging the individual's experience as "it is". For educators, this means being in a society where priorities of high achieving, standardized test scores and data-driven output dominate (Boldt, 1991). Having teachers experience "being" while they engage in something as ordinary and routine as the act of lesson planning helps an educator move from a place of strength and remain in control and balance from the inside out.

### **Conclusion**

Using the lesson planning process as a vehicle for educators to engage in mindfulness is largely missing from the available research. There is a fruitful opportunity that exists in this area to create professional development and embody educators to fight symptoms of both auto-pilot and burnout.

With too many public-school teachers working in discouraging conditions, and the lack of resources available to address resiliency and burnout issues, the educator must look within themselves for sustenance instead of waiting for someone to supply it. But, with that, exploring a teachers inner life raises the question: *how can the teacher's selfhood become a legitimate*



*topic in education and in our public dialogues on educational reform?* To which the response should be: school reform will never be achieved by renewing appropriations, restructuring schools, rewriting curricula, and revising texts if the human resource, called “the teacher” (on whom so much in education depends), continues to be/become disheartened.

Just in the same way as an anthropologist cannot understand peoples of ancient cultures by merely studying the work they did, and how they did it, but rather *why* they did, so too should the modern educator’s approach to work be in seeking to understand themselves and have knowledge of the values they live and work by. Exploring what has shaped attitudes toward work, this creative thesis will be working with an alternate vision for work in the classroom.

Today many see the problem of life as a matter of addition, our whole effort is to gain and hold and acquire and defend. Society tells us the only things that count are the things that can be counted (grades, salary, years of work, awards earned, etc.). What is there to life that can’t be counted or that can’t be measured? A teacher’s work should not be machine-like, but rather an integrated expression of being and doing; not simply paying lip-service to the idea of values but giving them time to manifest in a teacher’s classroom life. This is both the art and science of teaching; drawing lessons of our spirit at work, our inspiration, our vision and our sacrifices.

Although society is accustomed to reforms in education being external in nature, I believe twenty-first century education is at the precipice of an evolutionary path which will require educators to reach deeper and thus, open up to a new frontier in teaching and learning—the frontier of the teacher’s inner landscape. For educators looking to alleviate the auto-pilot syndrome or fight symptoms of burnout, partaking in a reflective practice(s) that acknowledges components that produce synergistic approaches—becoming more mindful when preparing/planning lessons and delivery of instruction—could help.

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### **Creative Thesis: Workshop Session Series**




The 3-session workshop series for educators is broken up into one-hour sessions to be held at least a week apart from one another—or more—if possible. Included are images of slides as well as speaking notes highlighting the talking points to be mentioned and discussed per session. Each session builds off of the previous one and gives an overview of how to use mindfulness in conjunction with value congruence to address auto-pilot syndrome and educator burnout that teachers are experiencing. Listed below is each session's topic.




Session 1: Introduction - Articulation of Values


Session 2: Shift in Thinking – Building Resiliency




Session 3: Mindfulness – Turning Inward


**Creative Project Slides for Session 1: Introduction – Articulation of Values**


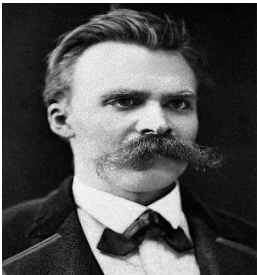

	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• this will not be an introductory MBSR course (a minimal working knowledge of mindfulness is assumed). We will be looking to go deeper with our personal practice by bringing in classroom experiences</li> <li>• no claims to be the cure-all or “magic bullet” or even offers of blind optimism/toxic positivity (Quintero &amp; Long, 2019), but more simply an opportunity to acknowledge and REALLY get curious and turn inward with our profession in an interesting way that you might never have thought otherwise</li> <li>• <b>Important Disclaimer!!:</b> I am not a mental health professional. All the information presented in this Workshop series should not be considered or used as a substitute for therapy/ mental health treatment</li> <li>• Participation in activities are at your discretion and also your level of comfort in sharing responses</li> <li>• questions are encouraged...we’re all learning together</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before we dive right in, let’s first do a breath exercise to “settle in”, shift our focus on the intention of today’s session &amp; start with grounding/centering ourselves with a mindfulness practice             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ TNH – Conscious Breathing (p. 8 – <i>Peace is Every Step</i>, 1991)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• As you are all seasoned mindfulness practitioners already, we can agree that Breath is the easiest platform to begin with -you don’t have to go anywhere special to do it. It is a never-ending abundant resource @ your disposal @ anytime</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anil Seth (2017) states we do not passively experience the world, we actively process it. He calls this concept interoception and is one that requires important internal perception and reflection on our bodies so that we may use this information to control and regulate how well or not well we are doing.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ As educators, sometimes we let the times we are not doing well get the best of us and leads to burnout</li> </ul> </li> <li>• QUICK review of “sensory/somatic” ways to take in information</li> <li>• While other Professional Development reflective practices draw attention outward, the mindfulness model draws attention inward using the body's own</li> </ul>



	<p>sensory biofeedback as interoceptive cues and reinforcers of the neural processes. In this light, embodiment practice emerges as the more appropriate for these applications where the externalized nature of modern professional development feedback models in comparison seems extraneous and confounding (Loizzo, 2018).</p>
 <p><i>*Show this image with the last 2 bullets</i></p>	<p><b>Introductory Activity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To get us started and set the stage for exploring a more contemplative approach with our lesson planning, we will explore Seth’s concept just a bit with a mindful exercise (visualization of your worst lesson ever delivered – we have all had that moment at some point)</li> <li>Bring full awareness and keep note of your 5 senses, awareness of body sensation, where it is manifesting, etc. (sensory/somatic experience)</li> </ul> <p><i>Anyone want to share: how was that experience like for you?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use responses to discuss additional points highlighted in the rationale (alignment/balanced, etc.)</li> <li>Then, repeat exercise with “best lesson ever”</li> <li>Compare/contrast</li> </ul> <p><i>Anyone want to share: how was that experience like for you?</i></p>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can anyone provide examples of other moments of mindfulness for you personally that might happen on a more regular/daily basis within your school day for you? (i.e. eating, walking, afternoon tea, etc.)</li> <li>How were these experiences for you?</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Background on how I arrived at the idea for this Workshop series</li> <li>My inquiry led to TONS of things existing for contemplative practices in the classroom to use <u>with students</u> (for “the learner”) but nothing for...</li> <li>Professional Development for teachers mostly involves cognitive matters (individual Subject content), educational theory or “training(s)”.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Hopefully we will see a trend towards more professional development efforts that aim for cultivating patterns of feeling and self-regulatory skills by increasing an educator’s intentional focus on the present moment</li> </ul> </li> <li>Share list of prominent names who are current leaders in the Mindfulness Education field I have consulted -NONE of them have heard of this mindfulness lesson planning idea existing thus far –</li> </ul>

	<p>unchartered territory to explore (a distinct gap in the research)</p>
 <p>MY HANDS ARE TIED</p>	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some districts do not allow autonomy (mandated curriculum and district-approved materials) – so limited flexibility             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The element of rote-ness</li> <li>✓ Auto-pilot might set in</li> <li>✓ Results in feelings of: disengagement, boredom, decreased sense of accomplishment (Lohrenz, 2021)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• ...and it’s probably not going away anytime soon, since “canned curriculum” is a multi-billion dollar business             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ \$35.8 billion 2020, which was an increase of \$7.5 from 2019 (Cauthen, n.d.)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What other common obstacles are there in which you feel your “hands are tied”?</li> </ul>
<p><i>The True Nature of Burnout</i></p>	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All information on this slide taken from (Diaz, 2018)</li> <li>• According to research published in the <i>Journal of Clinical Psychology</i>, burnout is identified as work induced depression</li> <li>• Unfortunately, the severity of burnout is not properly reflected as it is suggested those experiencing burnout should try to re-energize themselves by engaging themselves socially and taking time off from work.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ recommendations tend to be temporary fixes. For example, teachers usually believe summer vacations will re-energize them and cure their burnout symptoms. Research shows that this seldom works as burnout symptoms usually re-emerge within 2-3 weeks of returning to work.</li> <li>✓ Although such strategies can help in preventing burnout, they aren’t necessarily the most effective in overcoming burnout once someone is experiencing it.</li> <li>✓ Until educators, school administrators, and other professionals acknowledge the true nature of burnout we will continue to see suggestions that only scratch the surface of how to properly assist someone who is experiencing burnout (work induced depression).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Understand that burnout is caused by organizational factors. This is crucial because many believe burnout is teacher specific. Although some individuals are more susceptible to stress, placing the blame on teachers doesn’t address the root cause of burnout.</li> </ul>

 <p><b>KAROSHI</b></p> <p><i>*Show this image with the last 2 bullets</i></p>	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audience participation: popcorn-style shout out symptoms             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Point out that these are some of the same symptoms associated with auto-pilot also</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If we feel there's "no way out", our dorsal vagal complex system is activated &amp; is the point where our bodies disengage/collapse, expressed as shutting down and failing to engage in the present (Van der Kolk, 2014)</li> <li>• 90% of NEA members say feeling burned out is a serious problem &amp; 55% of them say they will be leaving teaching sooner than they had originally planned (Kamenetz, 2022)</li> <li>• In Japanese, they use the term <i>karoshi</i> meaning "death by overwork" (Rothberg, 2006)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How was taking the survey for you? What was your experience with it?</li> <li>• Review the results from the pre-survey (Richmond et al., 2001)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Below 36 indicates few burnout feelings</li> <li>✓ 36-55 indicates some strong feelings of burnout (but probably not a serious problem)</li> <li>✓ 56-70 indicates substantial burnout feelings, enough that getting some help is suggested</li> <li>✓ 71-80 indicate the individual is experiencing severe burnout</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Invitation to share             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Did it reveal any "ah-ha!" moments?</li> <li>✓ Or was it as you expected?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parker Palmer (1997) philosophy             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The truth the teacher brings to each of their educational encounters</li> <li>✓ Teaching, like any truly human activity emerges from one's inwardness -the stressors &amp; challenges we face in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of our inner lives</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Current educational syst. tends to bypass the emotional engagement system of the educator &amp; focus instead on <i>external</i> factors for professional development/change             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Consciousness researcher and physician Joe Dispenza says "if you are constantly placing your attention on all of the elements in your outer environment that caused you emotional stress then overtime you become habituated into living by the</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>hormones of stress as well as the resulting chemicals they produce” (Miners, 2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many problems within education systems can be attributed to lack of inner wisdom. Administering both heart and mind perspective to teaching could create wisdom as opposed to just “knowledge factories” (description from Freire (1970) text) - honoring the wholeness of our working life.</li> <li>• Because invisible phenomena cannot be empirically explained, their presence is commonly overlooked. It involves the unfolding of oneself, an infinite process that is completely present at every stage</li> <li>• So, how does one attend to the voice of the “teacher within”? We will be taking a contemplative approach towards lesson planning using values as a way to listen to that voice and listen to its counsel – not only for the sake of our work, but also for the sake of our own health</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of Values – identifying what is most important to an individual in their life, connecting to a deeper sense of “what matters”</li> <li>• Share list of values (Jeffrey, 2017)</li> <li>• <b>ACTIVITY:</b> identify your personal values             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ There is no right or wrong answer to what you value</li> <li>✓ If having trouble, maybe think about reasons you went into teaching in the first place. For example...                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ I wanted to make a difference (Social Action)</li> <li>➢ I wanted summers off (Family Time &amp; Recreation)</li> <li>➢ I wanted to make the “big bucks” 😊lol (Financial Security)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• When they do not match, we start to feel the effects of unbalance (<i>this is where mindfulness can be of benefit</i>)...The main goal we are striving for with the introduction of value congruence is to accept one's present circumstances, become more comfortable with them, and then be empowered to move beyond them with minimal stress, mindfulness is an extremely helpful tool for this kind of stress</li> <li>• The process of defining &amp; recognizing values while experiencing uncomfortable/stressful environment, helps teachers focus less on “the outcome” and bring greater vitality to their professional circumstances (Nikolic, 2019)</li> </ul>

  <p><i>*Show this image with the last 2 bullets</i></p>	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values vs. Goals             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ analogy of staple gear for camping – compass <u>always</u> points in one direction</li> <li>✓ versus GPS = location (a goal). Once you get there, the GPS stops. The compass continues pointing North (it’s never-ending)</li> <li>✓ Goal = performance based/demonstrating our accomplishments to others</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A teacher that endures despite incredible challenges has found a way to stay plugged into their values</li> <li>• Quote from Nietzsche supports this “someone who has a <i>why</i> to live can bear almost any <i>how</i>” (Cook &amp; Joseph, 2013)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Similar insights have appeared across cultures throughout history</li> <li>✓ If you have a why (a value) and it is prominent in your life, you can overcome so much</li> </ul> </li> <li>• That’s why value congruence is the focus of this workshop series – unfortunately, we can’t control some things, and we encounter many stressful situations at school, but it’s possible to find meaning in these events thru our values</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between now &amp; our next session, try experimenting with values identification.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ See if you can notice when values are out of alignment/balance (is the jaw tight? sour stomach, etc.)</li> <li>✓ During these times when you can detect that it feels “off”, question <i>why are you doing x?</i> (what value(s) is identified)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Simply knowing why will help assist in our next session on building resiliency</li> <li>• We must first become self-reliant (following points from Boldt, 1991)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ pointing the finger serves no purpose</li> <li>✓ creating practices we can live is crucial</li> <li>✓ using mindfulness we can simply be, we can think and think clearly</li> <li>✓ feelings of disengagement @ work...feel sometimes like a tool of production (become alienated from our work)</li> <li>✓ no wonder we become more interested in sports or gossip or get bumper stickers that claim “would rather be fishing” and find ourselves living for the weekends</li> <li>✓ with a mindfulness mindset we can work to embrace these feelings and accept these feelings without seeking to escape</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

 <p><i>In closing...</i></p>	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Final thoughts</li><li>• Q &amp; A</li><li>• For next session (sneak peek)</li></ul>
<p>Thank you for attending</p>  <p>Ami.Amero@sad12.org</p>	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide my contact information</li><li>• Thank you</li></ul>



**Handouts: Session 1****Teacher Burnout Scale (Richmond et al., 2001)**

**Directions:** Complete the following survey and calculate your score. This measure is designed to determine how you currently feel about your job and its related aspects. There are no right or wrong answers. Work quickly and circle your first impression. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you:

**Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; Neutral =3; Agree =4; Strongly Agree = 5**

- \_\_\_\_ 1. I am bored with my job.
- \_\_\_\_ 2. I am tired of my students.
- \_\_\_\_ 3. I am weary with all of my job responsibilities.
- \_\_\_\_ 4. My job doesn't excite me anymore.
- \_\_\_\_ 5. I dislike going to my job.
- \_\_\_\_ 6. I feel alienated at work.
- \_\_\_\_ 7. I feel frustrated at work.
- \_\_\_\_ 8. I avoid communication with students.
- \_\_\_\_ 9. I avoid communication with my colleagues.
- \_\_\_\_ 10. I communicate in a hostile manner at work.
- \_\_\_\_ 11. I feel ill at work.
- \_\_\_\_ 12. I think about calling my students ugly names.
- \_\_\_\_ 13. I avoid looking at my students.
- \_\_\_\_ 14. My students make me sick.
- \_\_\_\_ 15. I feel sick to my stomach when I think about work.
- \_\_\_\_ 16. I wish people would leave me alone at work.
- \_\_\_\_ 17. I dread going to school.
- \_\_\_\_ 18. I am apathetic about my job.
- \_\_\_\_ 19. I feel stressed at work.
- \_\_\_\_ 20. I have problems concentrating at work.




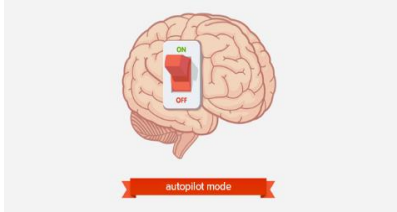
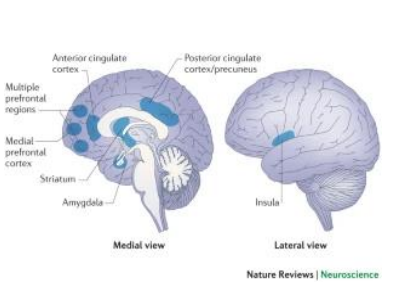
**SCORING:** Add all scores together. Results will be revealed at the first workshop session 😊

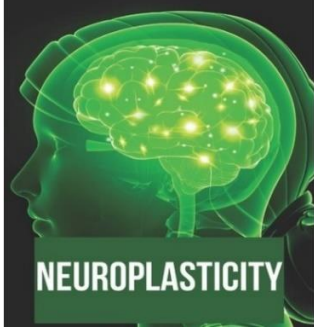



**List of 230 Core Values (Jeffrey, 2017)**




Acceptance	Accomplishment	Accountability	Accuracy	Achievement
Adaptability	Alertness	Altruism	Ambition	Amusement
Assertiveness	Attentive	Awareness	Balance	Beauty
Boldness	Bravery	Brilliance	Calm	Candor
Capable	Careful	Certainty	Challenge	Charity
Cleanliness	Clear	Clever	Comfort	Commitment
Common sense	Communication	Community	Compassion	Competence
Concentration	Confidence	Connection	Consciousness	Consistency
Contentment	Contribution	Control	Conviction	Cooperation
Courage	Courtesy	Creation	Creativity	Credibility
Curiosity	Decisive	Decisiveness	Dedication	Dependability
Determination	Development	Devotion	Dignity	Discipline
Discovery	Drive	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Empathy
Empower	Endurance	Energy	Enjoyment	Enthusiasm
Exploration	Expressive	Fairness	Family	Famous
Fearless	Feelings	Ferocious	Fidelity	Focus
Foresight	Fortitude	Freedom	Friendship	Fun
Generosity	Genius	Giving	Goodness	Grace
Gratitude	Greatness	Growth	Happiness	Hard work
Harmony	Health	Honesty	Honor	Hope
Humility	Imagination	Improvement	Independence	Individuality
Innovation	Inquisitive	Insightful	Inspiring	Integrity
Intelligence	Intensity	Intuitive	Irreverent	Joy
Justice	Kindness	Knowledge	Lawful	Leadership
Learning	Liberty	Logic	Love	Loyalty
Mastery	Maturity	Meaning	Moderation	Motivation
Openness	Optimism	Order	Organization	Originality
Passion	Patience	Peace	Performance	Persistence

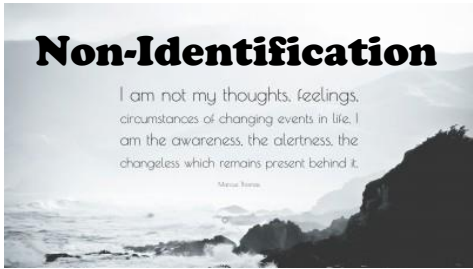



Present	Productivity	Professionalism	Prosperity	Purpose
Quality	Realistic	Reason	Recognition	Recreation
Reflective	Respect	Responsibility	Restraint	Results-oriented
Reverence	Rigor	Risk	Satisfaction	Security
Self-reliance	Selfless	Sensitivity	Serenity	Service
Sharing	Significance	Silence	Simplicity	Sincerity
Skill	Skillfulness	Smart	Solitude	Spirit
Spirituality	Spontaneous	Stability	Status	Stewardship
Strength	Structure	Success	Support	Surprise
Sustainability	Talent	Teamwork	Temperance	Thankful
Thorough	Thoughtful	Timeliness	Tolerance	Toughness
Traditional	Tranquility	Transparency	Trust	Trustworthy
Truth	Understanding	Uniqueness	Unity	Valor
Victory	Vigor	Vision	Vitality	Wealth

**Creative Project Slides for Session 2: Shift in Thinking – Building Resiliency**





	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preview of today’s session</li> <li>• But first....</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before we dive right in, let’s first do a breath exercise to “settle in”, shift our focus on the intention of today’s session &amp; start with grounding/centering ourselves with a mindfulness practice             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ TNH – Conscious Breathing (p. 8 – <i>Peace is Every Step</i>)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Acknowledges how we are doing, makes space for Pausing from our day, stops whatever auto-pilot syndrome may be happening</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report Out on your experience with the values identification experimentation activity</li> <li>• How was that for you?</li> <li>• Mindfulness-wise: The most practical thing we can achieve in any kind of work is insight into what is happening inside us as we do it. (Palmer, 1997)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• And how about instances of “auto pilot” mode?</li> <li>• Since we last met, can you recall &amp; share a few of your moments...</li> <li>• Before we continue with today’s session (#2), any points of clarification or unaddressed questions from session #1?</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brain regions involved in mindfulness (Tang et al., 2015)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Anterior cingulate cortex &amp; the striatum (attention control)</li> <li>✓ Multiple prefrontal regions, limbic region &amp; striatum (emotion regulation)</li> <li>✓ The insula, medial prefrontal cortex, posterior cingulate cortex &amp; precuneus (self-awareness)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Many disorders, such as depression &amp; anxiety (symptoms of burnout) involve problems engendered by various <i>interoceptive</i> signals,</li> </ul>

	<p>and importantly these problems may be related to structural declines in the <u>insula</u> (Fox et al., 2014)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So, how can we repair &amp; fix it???</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neuroplasticity (reprogramming &amp; insight) – preventive/sustaining</li> <li>• Neurophenomenology (Varela &amp; Thompson, 1990s) – study of experience from 1st person point of view, trying to link w/ relevant neurological process (physiology), Clinical research = attentional restructuring training the mind in moment-to-moment awareness (Epstein &amp; Lieff, 1986)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through the value congruence exercise, we can build up the area(s) of our brain and rewire it to help with educator resiliency, which means there is a possibility to reduce longevity of burnout symptoms</li> <li>• To avoid burnout, the antithesis of burnout is resilience (Faigin, 2022)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's one thing to acknowledge, it's another thing altogether to <u>feel</u> in the midst of everyday circumstances at work. This is when we can shift our awareness to our more subtler, but certain identity of values (Martella-Whitsett &amp; Whitsett, 2021)</li> <li>• Otherwise, we are just caught up in spending all our energies focusing on things we cannot control (Beach ball analogy)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background of Tara Brach's practice</li> <li>• We will break down each step (intention to create an embodied presence in the classroom and anchor out of stuck/auto-pilot thinking) (Brach, 2011)</li> <li>• tweak as suits your individual needs</li> <li>• Who we are today was shaped by the imprints of past experiences and exert a powerful influence on our behavior in the present. The practice of mindfulness works because it provides new information – but how much reprogramming depends on our degree of mindfulness (Yates, 2015)</li> </ul>




	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize = what is happening. What is going on internally?</li> <li>• Becoming acquainted with sensory experiences in the present moment:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What sensations are you most aware of?</li> <li>✓ What emotions?</li> <li>✓ Is your mind filled with churning thoughts?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Take a moment to become aware of whatever is pre-dominant, or the overall emotional tone of the situation.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept = allow the experience to be there just as it is</li> <li>• Taking a Pause to create space and accept that in these moments, “what is...is.” (Kramer, 2007)</li> <li>• At this point, you might find that body and mind are contracted in resistance.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Value(s) might start to pop up</li> </ul> </li> <li>• No worries - at this point in RAIN, you are simply noticing what is true and intending not to judge, push away, avoid, deny or alter/control anything you find</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaker Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate = Bringing an interest to your experience will make it possible to deepen one’s attention and explore further (physical tightness, pressure, sensations)</li> <li>• If the following questions are helpful, feel free to experiment; varying the sequence and content             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What is the worst part of this?</li> <li>✓ What emotions does this bring up?</li> <li>✓ Where are my feelings about this strongest in my body?</li> <li>✓ When I assume the facial expression and body posture that best reflect these feelings and emotions, what do I notice?</li> <li>✓ Are these feelings familiar, something I’ve experienced earlier in my life?</li> <li>✓ If my tension could communicate, what would it express (words, feelings, images)?</li> <li>✓ How does this part want me to be with it?</li> <li>✓ What does this part most need?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Value(s) might pop up here as well. Don’t analyze just yet</li> </ul>



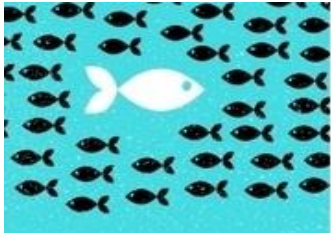
 <p><b>Non-Identification</b></p> <p>I am not my thoughts, feelings, circumstances of changing events in life. I am the awareness, the alertness, the changeless which remains present behind it.</p> <p><small>Marianne Korman</small></p>	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid identifying with the experience             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <i>I am not my thoughts, feelings, circumstances of changing events in life. I am the awareness, the alertness, the changeless which remains present behind it (Thomas, 2022)</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• your sense of who you are is not fused with or defined by any limited set of emotions, sensations or stories.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ When we step away from identification with the experience and focus on our values, we begin to intuit and live from the openness that express our natural awareness</li> </ul> </li> <li>• there ARE some things that will be out of our control, but we're not getting rid of the waves, just making the experience more ocean-like....slowly building our inner wisdom as teachers</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How was that for you?</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between now &amp; our next session, try experimenting with R.A.I.N.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Random times throughout the school day</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Bring your lesson planning materials with you for some "hands on" independent work for Session #3</li> </ul>
<p>Thank you for attending</p>  <p><b>Ami.Amero@sad12.org</b></p>	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final thoughts</li> <li>• Q &amp; A from audience</li> <li>• Provide my contact information</li> <li>• Thank you</li> </ul>

**Creative Project Slides for Session 3: Mindfulness – Turning Inward/Manifesting**

	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preview of today’s session</li> <li>• But first....</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before we dive right in, let’s first do a breath exercise to “settle in”, shift our focus on the intention of today’s session &amp; start with grounding/centering ourselves with a mindfulness practice             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ TNH – Conscious Breathing (p. 8 – <i>Peace is Every Step</i>)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report Out on your experience with either the continued practice of value congruence OR the RAIN activity or both             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ what did you notice?</li> <li>✓ how was it for you?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Before we continue with today’s session (#3), any points of clarification or unaddressed questions from session #2?</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thin mindfulness is the concept configured around individual self-improvement (i.e., teacher professional development courses to teach mindfulness to students)</li> <li>• thick mindfulness is designated and conceived around <u>transformation</u>. Thick notions go far beyond a mental training regimen designed to improve individual wellbeing (McCaw, 2020) and include more insightful self-regulation activities such as: monitoring, identifying, responding to the feedback in one’s body, and evaluating the effectiveness of one’s actions</li> <li>• Ancient times (4<sup>th</sup> c. Aristotle) defined as eudemonic behavior (i.e. meaning making)</li> <li>• Ergas (2019) goes further with this notion in that mindfulness is not merely a technique (thin), but rather a way of life (thick); using reflection as a way of <i>being</i></li> <li>• This is what we are attempting with our value congruence practice - looking to turn inward and explore if our values match the</li> </ul>



 <p><i>*Show this image with the last bullet</i></p>	<p>sensory/somatic experience taking place (Faigin, 2022)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ And more importantly, during the times when we find they are not, consciously choosing to move ahead with the task</li> <li>✓ Acknowledging that our hands may be tied &amp; there's a value disconnect, but forging forward with awareness vs. a zombie-like/autopilot state</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The emphasis is placed on becoming acquainted with sensory experiences in the present moment with an importance resting on identifying an educator's value-driven behavior. Rather than trying to alter or eliminate negative thoughts, individuals work instead on changing the impact of thoughts by changing the mental context in which they occur (Luoma et al., 2007).</li> <li>• This method is exemplified through its illumination of values. The identification of personal values helps the individual connect problems and uncontrollable events to their personal—or in the educator's case, professional—values. This value-centered mindset promotes a better outcome as opposed to covering up negative thoughts (Harris, 2008)</li> <li>• Show beach ball metaphor again</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before we begin and have you start working independently, the intention is to experience the substance of the body as made up of vibrating particles</li> <li>• And these particles made up of even finer energy particles</li> <li>• Drifting more deeply into your lesson planning practice, feel into each particle. What do you notice? (Roche, 2014)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educators brought their lesson planning materials to this session to do a full practice</li> <li>• One of the benefits to this approach is that teachers do not need a collaborative/group effort (can do this individually anytime)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Bodily sensations</li> <li>✓ Tension</li> <li>✓ Posture</li> <li>✓ Values congruence</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Also, can be as short or long as you want</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About 5 mins in, remind the participants...</li> <li>• The ultimate goal in practicing mindfulness would be to have educators avoid the auto pilot syndrome and instead have both the Left and Right hemispheres of their brains working in conjunction with each other.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Mindsight (Siegel, 2011) defines this concept as integration and suggests that a teacher who does not experience this might say “<i>I don’t know what I feel</i>” (which is indicative of burnout)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If educators were to embrace and commit to implementing a mindfulness-based lesson planning practice, there is great potential to break the auto pilot mode.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does anyone want to share how their experience was?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ How was that for you?</li> <li>✓ What types of insight/body sensations: increase awareness of mental states</li> <li>✓ Did anyone find themselves gravitating toward a specific technique: (i.e. mantra, breath, visualization, power of pause, lkm, other, etc.)</li> <li>✓ Values congruence reflection</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiential approaches to education may not be perceived by some public-school colleagues as mainstream, proper, serious, normal, or beneficial (James &amp; Nerantzi, 2019)</li> <li>• Growth in inner awareness for the sake of our professional practice will not be an easy, or possibly even popular task             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ it’s like everything – not everyone will buy in</li> <li>✓ but is one that educators must take up if they wish to strengthen their capacity to pursue the mission of education</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Even if some educators do not accept any metaphysical meanings, the call for school reform alone warrants a deeper look into educator values to cultivate inner wisdom and could very well be a key factor that is currently missing from the conversation</li> </ul>

<p>Some things take time.</p>	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This will take practice</li> <li>• Dr. Bradley Jabour (2016) – it is possible to fix wiring, but like muscle-building, if we were working on our biceps, we need to keep at it (continual practice)</li> </ul>
<p>Thank you for attending</p> <p><a href="mailto:Ami.Amero@sad12.org">Ami.Amero@sad12.org</a></p>	<p><b>Speaking Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am grateful for your interest in taking this journey with me</li> <li>• Documentation of your continuing education hours will be sent to you electronically once Person-so&amp;so signs the certificates</li> <li>• Provide my contact information</li> <li>• Thank you</li> </ul>

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