

# The Struggle is Real:

## Self-Care and Balance for Educators

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First Literacy  
Nov. & Dec. 2021

# Welcome

As everyone is joining, please take a minute to check in:

<https://PollEv.com/mathacognitive618>

(responses are shared anonymously)

## About Me:

*Math teacher, multi-job working ABE professional;  
writer-trainer-consultant in my "free" time; brain-geek and  
life-long learner; partner, new mom, step-mom; gardener and  
novice forager.*

*I believe in reflective practice, my students, and  
color-coded spreadsheets.*

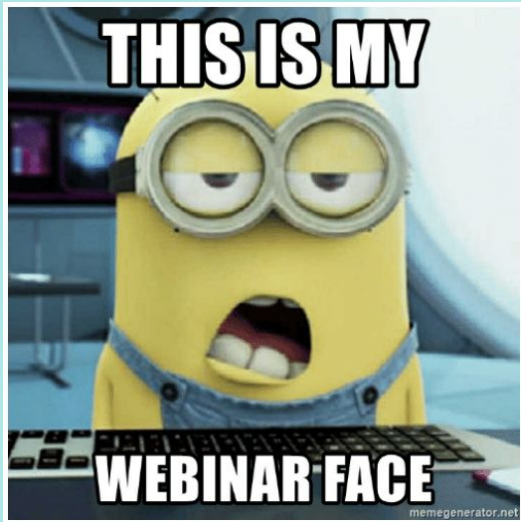
**Allison J. Reid**

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# Agenda

- ❖ Welcome
- ❖ Guiding Ideas
- ❖ 3 Elements
- ❖ Managing Challenges
- ❖ Amplifying Positives
- ❖ Maintaining Energy
- ❖ Action Planning & Wrap up



## Participation

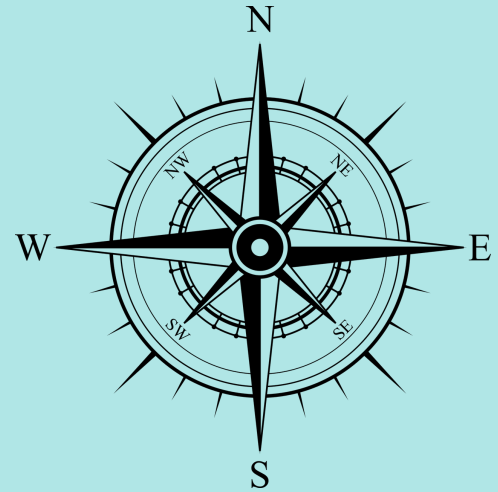
This format is tough for many of us to engage ... please try.

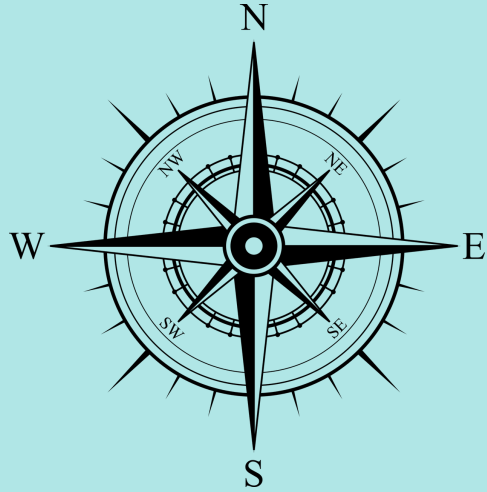
I will ask for your participation in the chat box, shared documents etc.

Please ask questions or share ideas as we go.

# Some guiding ideas ...

- You (have to) do you
- We are all doing the best we can, with what we've got
- Lets try not to stress about our stress or self-care (No one needs that)





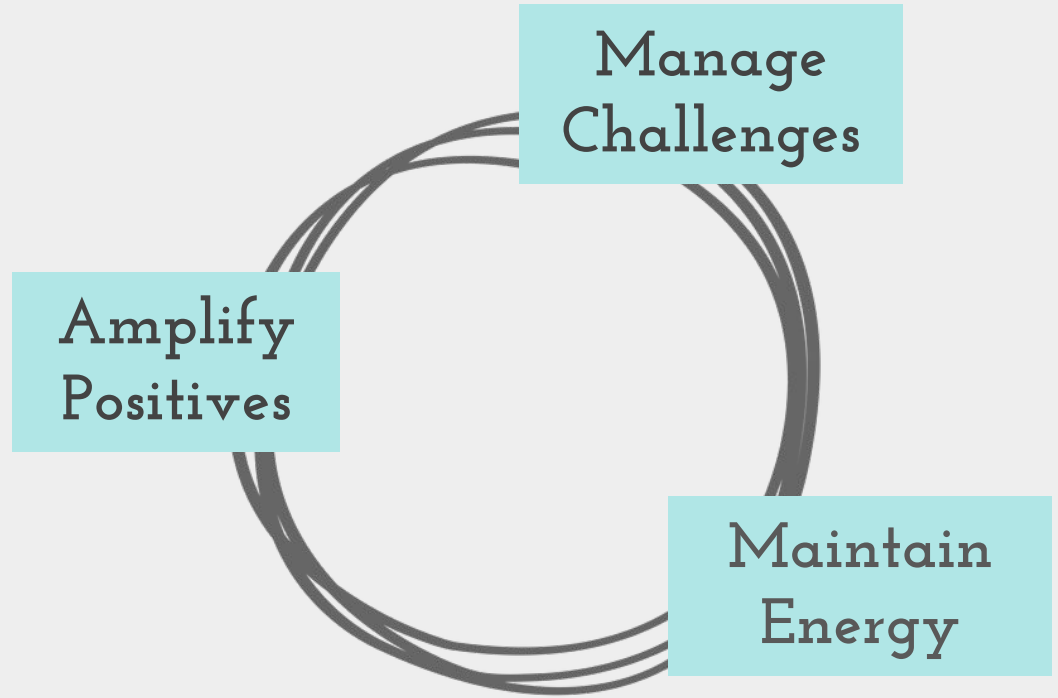
Self-care does not / can not  
replace mental health care.

If you are struggling and  
self care isn't enough, please  
seek professional help.

One resource:

[samhsa.gov/find-treatment](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-treatment)

# Three Elements of Self Care







# Amplify Positives

# Why?

Easier to face challenges when we're also filled up  
with positives

**BUT..**

It's easy to lose sight of them

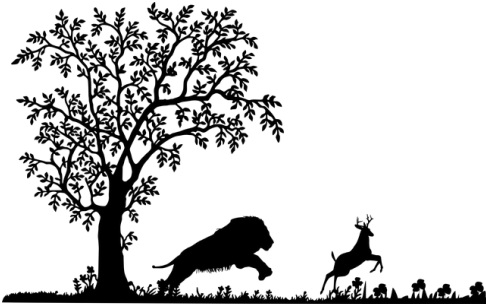


# Negativity Bias

(aka blame evolution)

Human brains tend to register negative experiences more strongly than positive ones.

It's a good plan, when negative  
= saber tooth tiger den; less so  
when negative = curt email

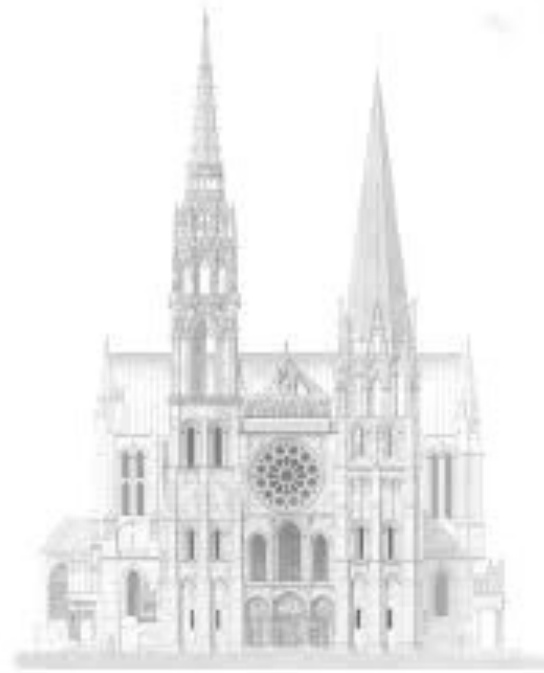


Identifying Positives  
≠ Denying, Ignoring  
or Minimizing the  
Challenges



# A parable and some research

(aka: Cathedral building &  
hospital maintenance staff)



# Identifying Positives

In our work context:

- Making impact on students
- Teaching something you love
- Working with colleagues
- Learning something new
- Accomplishing a goal
- Etc.



*A moment of (shared) reflection:*

What are some aspects of your work that energize you?

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# Getting the Most from Positives

**Dopamine Hacking:** Use reminders and anticipation to savor/get more from your positives





# Getting the Most from Positives

**Schedule Strategically:** The peak-end rule - we remember the peaks and the ends the most, the middles kind of fade out



# Getting the Most from Positives

**Leverage Flexibility or Goals:** Find ways to incorporate more of your energizers



## *Breakout Groups:*

In your work, what specific steps can you take to get the most from the positive aspects of work? Try to identify at least one specific strategy per person.

If you're done early: How can you support others to identify and amplify their positives?

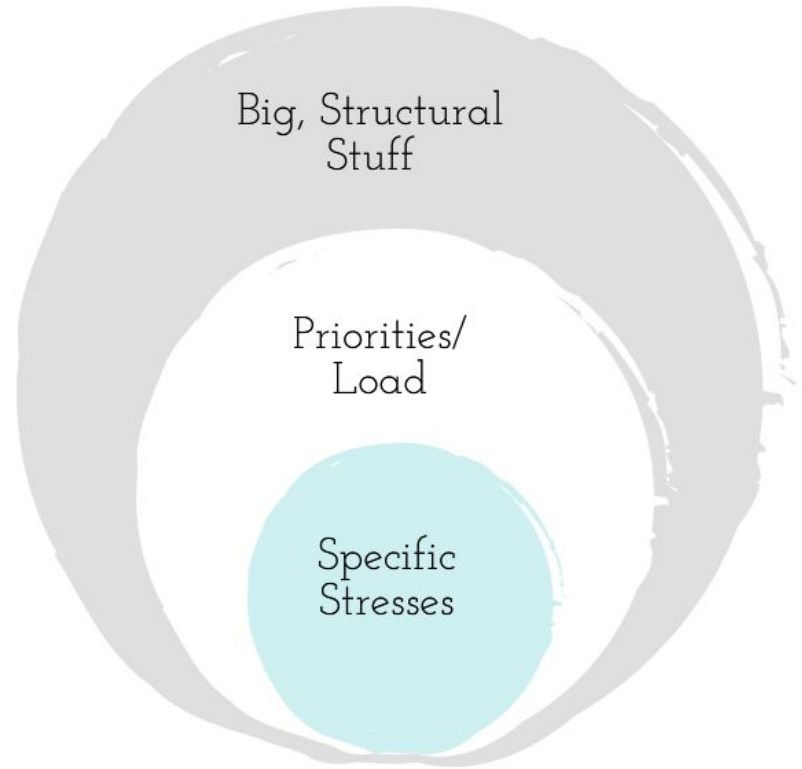
# Manage Challenges

# But first: words of wisdom

*“Pick your battles”*

Source: my mom  
(for my entire adolescence)

# A partial typology of challenges



# Big, Structural Stuff

- It's real
- Its impact on us is real

The Pandemic  
Economic stresses  
Racism  
Limited Budgets  
Politics  
Sexism  
Personal Grievs  
Etc.

# Big, Structural Stuff

- Taking action can be self care
- So can acknowledging our limits

The Pandemic

Economic stresses

Racism

Limited Budgets

Politics

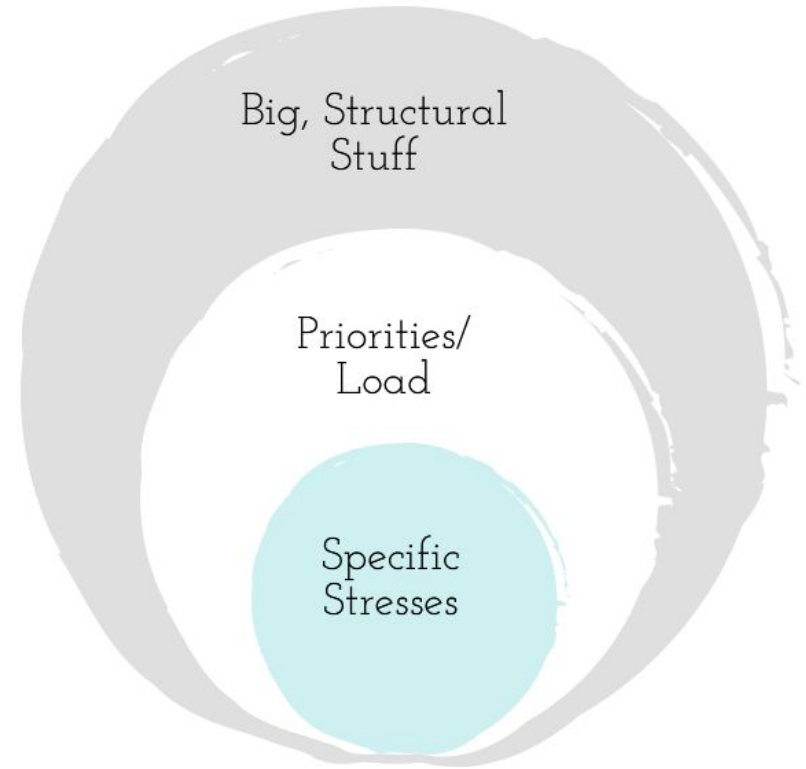
Sexism

Personal Grievs

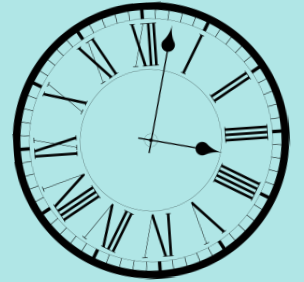
Etc.



# Priorities & Load



Research: Productivity  
**declines** as work hours go up



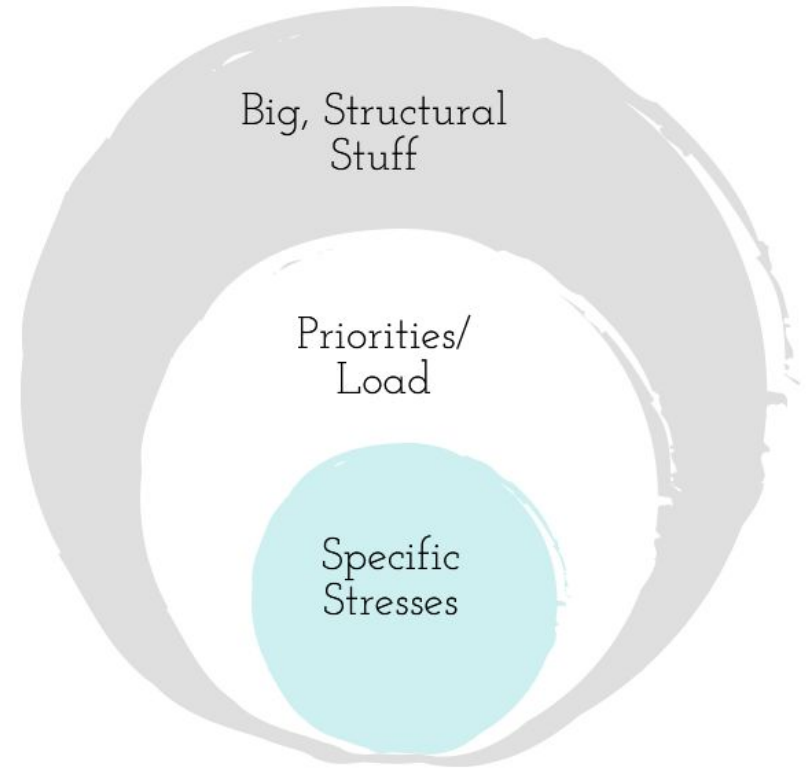
# Priorities / Load

- That difficult conversation is self care
- And, it is care for others as well



Food for Thought: "You Aren't Lazy,  
You Just Need to Slow Down"

# Specific Stresses



# Getting Specific: Reflection

When we struggle,  
can we identify the  
specific reasons/  
triggers?

"I'm burnt from  
a long day"

"because I had  
a bunch of  
meetings."

"And I kind of  
hate Zoom"

(welcome to  
Allison's brain)

"because I feel  
self-conscious  
on camera"

# Solving Specifics

It's easier to find solutions to specifics (Zoom is rough) than general (I'm exhausted).

If we know our triggers, we can sometimes proactively prevent/manage

# Upstreaming

Preventing future stresses

(aka, making sub plans  
before you're sick)

# *Encouragement for (personal) reflection:*

Think about a recent challenging time/experience, what specific stresses can you identify in that? **Ask yourself (as gently, non-judgmentally as you can) what specifically is hard about this for me?** Get as specific as you can.

Can you take steps to alleviate or avoid this specific element?



## *Breakout Groups:*

**In your work, what specific steps can you take to manage a challenge?** You may reflect on the big stuff, load, or specific stresses. Share only if you are ready.

If you are done early: How can you support others around you with their challenges?

# The Struggle is Real:

Self-Care and Balance for Educators

## Session 2

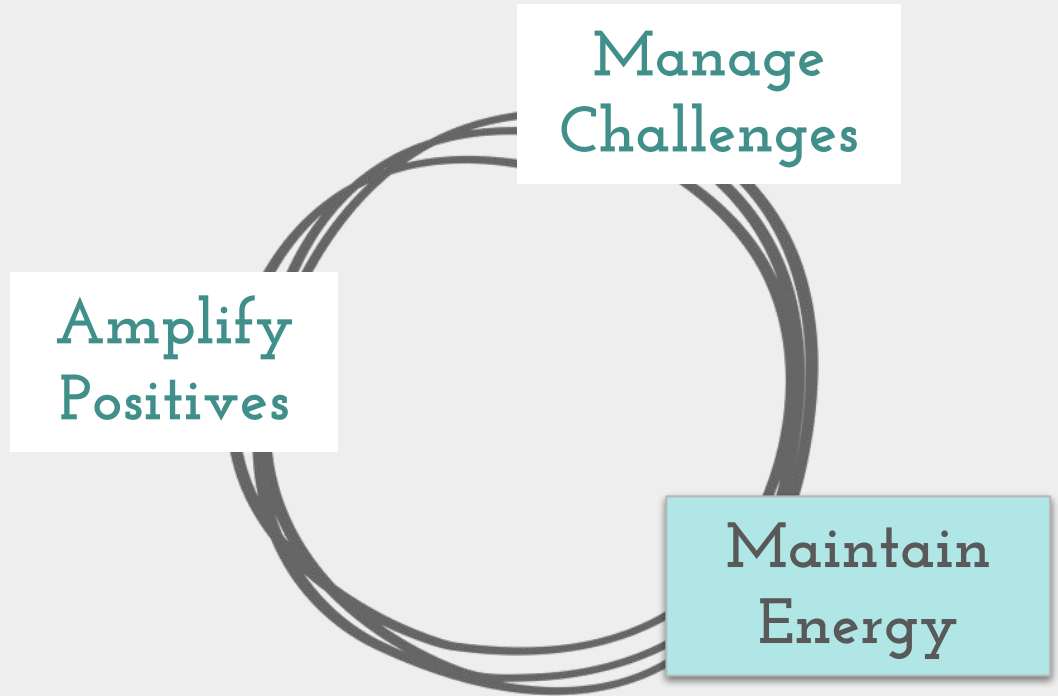
# *Encouragement for (personal) reflection:*

How are you today? Do you need to do anything to land, be present, focus for this session?

Thinking about self-care, how have the last couple weeks gone for you?

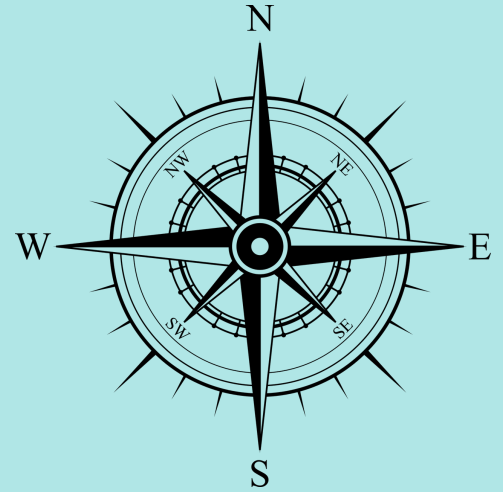


# Three Elements of Self Care



# Acknowledging context...

- Pandemic fatigue
- It's (another) hard year to be in education
- The holidays can be complicated



# *Breakout Groups:*

*Choose your own share...*

How are you doing today?

What's stayed with you since the previous session?

What's working or not for you in terms of self care and balance?

**Maintain  
Energy**

# Maintaining Energy

- Basic care (food, rest etc.)
- Boundaries, balance or integration
- Restoration, soothing, treats





# Maintaining Energy

- The **what** is (relatively) simple, the **how** can be harder to figure out

Healthy food

Enough rest

Social connection

Occasional treats

Stress relief

Breaks & boundaries

Fun/rewarding activities

Etc.

# We often feel better after...

Connecting ... or disconnecting

Savoring

Resting ... or moving

Creating

Flow (Challenging ourselves)

Laughing ... or crying

(Because:  
"You do you")

# Mindful Choices

- **Key question:** “Will I feel better **after?**” or “Will I be glad that I did this?” (Which are different from “Do I feel like doing this now?”)




# *Encouragement for (personal) reflection:*

Do you get sucked into any fake self care/depleted decision making traps?

What activities do you (actually) feel better after?

Yes, but how...

Don't rely on willpower when you're depleted



Two  
Overarching  
Strategies  
Instead

- Make good decisions ...  
**before** you're depleted
  
- **Make it easy** to  
implement when you  
are depleted

# Making Good Decisions Ahead Might Look Like

- A list of fun activities on the fridge or your phone
- Healthy meals in the freezer
- Plans with friends/family



# Making It Easy to Implement Might Look Like ...

- Phone alarms to take breaks
- Having a routine/standing date (Taco Tuesday)
- Signing up for a class, subscription etc.

# Specific Tips

My list of 50  
Strategies

[https://bit.ly/  
2HP3gh8](https://bit.ly/2HP3gh8)

*A moment of (shared) reflection:*

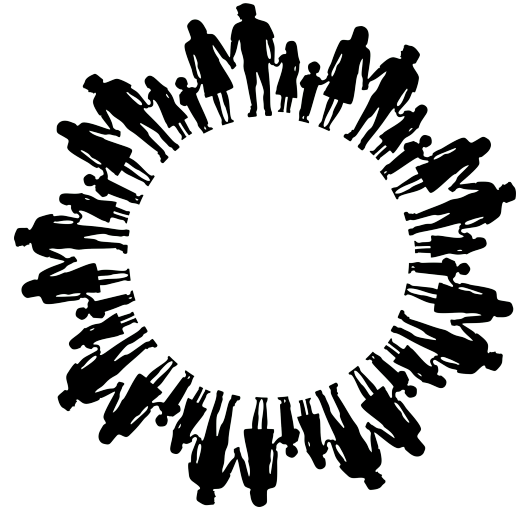
What's working for you to maintain your energy?

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# Pandemic Learning

(That shouldn't have taken a pandemic,  
but better late than never)

Saying "You [individual] should  
practice self care" is not enough



## *Breakout Groups:*

In your work-role (teacher/advisor/director etc.), how can you set things up so it is easier to practice self-care? For yourself? For others around you?

# Action Planning

# Action Planning

## Individual Planning Guide:

<https://bit.ly/35ifAOS>



The diagram consists of three overlapping circles arranged in a triangle. Each circle is drawn with multiple overlapping lines, creating a thick, textured appearance. Three semi-transparent white rectangular boxes are placed around the circles, each containing text. The top box is at the top right, the bottom box is at the bottom right, and the left box is on the left side.

Amplify  
Positives

Manage  
Challenges

Maintain  
Energy

# Committing to Action

If you would benefit from **a nudge or other follow up**, please complete the form

**Follow Up Form:**

<https://forms.gle/A3UFKTZ5ysWd5Q2t8>



# Thank You & Please Stay in Touch

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