



Dear School Counselors,

You are more than halfway through the school year. Congratulations on the accomplishment of making it this far! I hope you have taken time to rest and take care of yourselves despite the chaos that is all around us.

During this second half of the academic year, we must all be mindful about mental health and wellness. School still looks different with hybrid class schedules, and the uncertainty that still looms over us all with COVID-19. Plus, continual racial and social injustice, your own personal life stressors, all on top of trying your best to care for your students. It is absolutely a lot for one person to handle!

During this time, it is important to tune into your body and mind. Some questions you should ask yourself throughout the remainder of the school year are:

- » How are you being impacted by the chronic trauma of a pandemic?
- » How has your ability to focus declined throughout the school year?
- » How can I communicate with mentors, colleagues or peers about present barriers I am facing?
- » Have I taken three deep breaths today?

Please know, you are not alone. There will always be someone willing to listen and be there for you. Please seek out support from your peers and mentors in order to process these feelings. If you are feeling burnt out or some other uncomfortable feeling due to the stress associated with being a school counselor during a pandemic, please let someone know. "Why?" you may be asking... Well by speaking to someone about your struggles can actually physically and mentally heal your body (catharsis!). Also, the person you confide in can help you with time management or other skills to continue trekking through this school year. Or, they may send you to another person who can truly help you in a way you never imagined was possible.

Furthermore, when you need a moment to pause and just feel a little better, less stressed, or are seeking for some form of relief, something that will promote greater emotional and physical wellbeing is the utilization of mindfulness and breathing techniques. Physically, the stress you are experiencing can lead to high blood pressure, chronic health issues, chronic pain, and many other physical symptoms (Mental Health Connection, 2017) alongside the mental and emotional symptoms listed earlier in this note. Therefore, adding a mindfulness practice can help to combat these symptoms.

I suggest you take some time to practice the following exercise:

A place to start...

1. What feelings can I associate with the stress I am experiencing right now?
2. Write down or say to yourself, "On a scale of 1-10, how high is the stress/feelings I am experiencing?"
3. Where do I feel the stress in my body?
4. Now breathe in (deeply and slowly), and breathe out three times.



Why does this help?

1. You are able to acknowledge the pain you feel. When we bring this to light, we are able to heal. By not acknowledging, it will only continue to fester.
2. By taking mindful, slow, breaths, you are able to combat the negative physical effects of emotional stress.

Other resources for mindful breathing:

- » Alternate nostril breathing:
[youtube.com/watch?v=8VwufJrUhic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8VwufJrUhic)
- » Guided meditation:
[youtube.com/watch?v=YXRnPsve-ek](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXRnPsve-ek)

Overall, if you are reading this, I want you to know:

You are resilient! You are doing a great job. Hang in there; there is light at the end of the tunnel.
You WILL reach your goals!

Take Care,

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