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Seven ideas to help you put on your oxygen mask and take care of your wellbeing

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Jane Taylor is a teacher who lives on the Gold Coast. Jane began her career as a professional athlete competing on the world tennis stage before finding her passion for learning and building relationships. This passion evolved into a career in education as well as facilitating national coaching programs for Tennis Australia and co-ordinating national initiatives for education. Jane has trained over 13,000 people in coaching, mindfulness meditation, mental health promotion and prevention and organisational wellbeing.

As people working in education, we are quite often filling many roles in our classroom, child care centre or school. Sometimes it can be challenging to get to the end of the to-do list each day. Then before we know it, it's the weekend and we have forgotten to take time out for ourselves and look after our health and wellbeing.

A few years ago, I noticed this becoming a pattern of mine and I wanted to change it. I knew if I didn't I would burn out. So what are some strategies I can do to find a little more balance in my week?

The following seven strategies may help you find more balance in life and work.

1. Know your why.

Why do you want balance? What fuels your desires? What gets you out of bed each morning? Knowing the answers to these questions relate to your why! Many of the influential and successful people in this world are driven by more than just money. Money can be a spin-off from living our lives on purpose. However, for the majority of people, it is not the driving force.

What is your driving force or your why? Is it to have more freedom, to leave a legacy, to inspire people or to show them that they matter? Is it time to find out why you do the things you do?

2. Become aware of and align your professional goals or intentions with your school or child care centre.

For example, one of the school and/or child care centre goals may be to provide a safe and supportive environment. How do you contribute to this goal in your role? Once you have identified this, how can you break this down into an achievable action for yourself? Having done this, you can identify how you can measure this in your daily actions and by when you will achieve it. Keep it SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.

One thing I have done with my essential tasks (both personal and professional) is

identify what I need to do daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly, half-yearly and yearly. Then all of these tasks have been scheduled, with the time it takes to complete them, in my diary as reminders, so I know what I need to do. This keeps me on track with my balance and limits the number of surprises, for example, reporting deadlines.

3. Schedule and complete reflection time each week in your diary.

As indicated in strategy number 2, I have broken down my personal and professional intentions or goals into small weekly actionable steps. Once these are broken down into the smallest possible step, for example check e-mails, I schedule the actions in my task management system. Most of these actions are recurring actions (daily, weekly, fortnightly or monthly) and, because I like to track my progress, I tick off the actions once I have completed them.

What are your personal intentions or goals for your personal and professional life? Are these intentions or goals in line with your school or child care centre?

After you have identified your personal intentions or goals and they align with your school or centre goals, you can identify your weekly, fortnightly, monthly, 3-monthly, 6-monthly or yearly actions. Then these actions can be scheduled in your task management system or diary with the allotted time it takes to complete each task. These tasks form the basis of your reflection time so you can monitor your progress. You can also take time out to reflect on different situations in your life as well.

4. Allow people to support you.

If you do everything for yourself, you are blocking people from supporting you

and this can have an impact on balance in your life and increase your chances of burnout. I really believe we are all here for a reason and with that we have strengths in a variety of different areas. Subsequently, we cannot be great at everything. So, allowing people to support you is important!

For example, do you ever have times in your life where you really want to talk a situation over with someone to get a different perspective? Have you ever had a time when you knew what you were after but you couldn't quite figure out where to find it? Have you ever had a time when you just needed someone to listen to you? We all need the support of friends, colleagues and family around us to support us through our life.

Share with a friend, colleague, coach or family member one of the things that you are going to take action on this week and allow that person to support you in achieving that task? As you are doing this activity notice how you are feeling.

- The action that I am taking this week is ...
- The person I will ask to support me is ...
- What did I think, feel, notice or observe as I allowed this person to support me ...?

5. Reward yourself and celebrate your results.

This is important, so important in fact that many people forget to do it. When we are setting and achieving goals, many of us are so focused on the achievement of the goal that we forget about the process and the actual achievement of a goal is one single point in time. One wise person said a long time ago *the journey is more important than the destination*. So on your journey to finding balance, identify how you can reward yourself and celebrate the results.

Write down three ways that you are going to reward yourself and/or celebrate for

completing the actions you set for yourself this week. One way I enjoy rewarding myself is going to the movies. It doesn't have to be huge. However, it just has to speak to you and you have to commit to doing it. After you have written the activities down, plan when you are going to reward yourself this coming week. Celebrate and enjoy!

6. Take time out.

Just like professional athletes and nature – it is important to take time out and recharge your energy.

What do you enjoy doing to recharge your energy? Do you exercise and hear the leaves rustling on the trees or the kids playing in the playground; smell the flowers in the garden or the salty air if you live by the beach? What do you do to take time out of your day?

You may like to write down five things you can do this week to recharge your energy, then notice how you feel as you are doing them.

7. Be grateful.

There are so many ways we can be grateful in life. Who or what are you appreciative of in this moment? Who helped you today? Have you said thank you to them?

The impact of gratitude on our lives is truly amazing.

So, there you have it - seven ideas to put on your own oxygen mask and take care of your wellbeing in a busy world. I hope they help you.

If you would like to connect with Jane, please visit the Habits for Wellbeing website on www.habitsforwellbeing.com.

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