



Wellness for Educators Webinar - Whole: Wellbeing in Education - Strategies & Tools
Guests: Alejandra Ramos, Michelle Kinder, and Rex Miller
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Kathryn Kennedy: Hi, everyone, and thank you so much for joining us this afternoon for the first Wellness for Educators webinar. I am Dr. Kathryn Kennedy. I'm an education consultant and researcher in the areas of online learning, well-being, trauma-informed practices, and social-emotional learning. And Wellness for Educators is based in Mid Coast Maine. And through all of our programs, we are honored and grateful to be able to work with so many educators worldwide, including the wonderful ones who have joined us for today's panel. And we also offer a number of other things including a wellness library for \$25 a year. It's filled with short five-minute wellness strategies that you can use for yourself as well as for your students and colleagues. And our programs include but are not limited to - I'll switch over to our website here; it's wellnessforeducators.com - professional learning opportunities through book studies. We're actually just starting one actually last week on Permission to Feel, Marc Brackett's new book. It's awesome, definitely worth jumping into webinars like this one, which is our first one. We also have personalized workshops for different schools and districts who are interested in conferences. And coming up soon, we'll be doing some micro-courses and badging opportunities as well as a podcast. So, we hope that you jump in there and get involved in the community. It's a wonderful, supportive community, and we'd love to have you be part of it.

And we are so excited about our panel today where we will focus on well-being in education and sharing strategies and tools from our wonderful panelists. During our time together today, we also want you to be part of the conversation. So please, be sure to share your strategies, tools, and resources in the chat area, and feel free to also add your questions in the chat area, too. And I'll keep an eye on that throughout the time, and we'll share those with our questions with our panelists as we go. So, I'm going to go ahead and hand it over to Michelle to introduce herself first. Michelle.

Michelle Kinder: Hi, Kathryn. Thank you so much. I'm Michelle Kinder, and I'm a family therapist by trade and worked for 20 years with Momentous Institute, which is an organization devoted to social-emotional health in children, and works deeply at the intersection of mental health and education. And one of our chief findings was that, if we're going to take the best possible care of children in regard to their social-emotional health, we have to take care of the

adults who care for the children. And so that's my interest in this topic in this community, and I'm thrilled to be here.

Kathryn Kennedy: Wonderful, Michelle. Thank you so much. And I'll pass it over to Alejandra.

Alejandra Ramos: Hi. I'm Alejandra Ramos. I have a lot of different hats, I think, but they are all connected. Well, during the day, I'm a teacher. I'm a dual language gifted and talented educator here in Dallas. When I'm not teaching, I'm a writer. But mindfulness and social-emotional learning is a really important part of my life mostly because of experiences with mental health and growing up as a gifted and talented student myself. And that's one of the reasons why I am so interested in teaching that to my students and incorporating that into our everyday lessons and not just as something for our to-do list, right. Something that they really embody and that they understand. But it's also really important for us teachers to receive trainings on it, to really understand it, and so we can pass it to our students and also communicate it to the parents and just help them understand of how social-emotional learning and emotional intelligence really-- it shows in all of the different aspects of our life, not just in education, not just in the classroom but in everything that we do.

Kathryn Kennedy: That's so very true. Okay, so we'll move on to Rex. If you can introduce yourself too.

Rex Miller: So, my company is called Mind Shift and we're a research firm and primarily we work in architecture, engineering, and construction. So, I'm a bit of an outlier in this. I'm a futurist by degree in my undergrad and masters, and the way we got into this research was about eight years ago when we were looking at culture in the workplace but then culture and learning in education. So, Brooke hired me to help us put together a research process that we've developed on looking at what we call wicked problems. So why has education performance been stuck? Why is disengagement stuck? 70% of teachers are considered to be disengaged. So, during that research, I met Michelle, and Michelle became our guide into the whole world of emotional intelligence and social-emotional literacy. So, we ended the first book called Humanizing the Education Machine, but then I went to an educational workshop and we started seeing that mental health was really the central issue underlying all the performance issues. And so, Michelle's work in making sure teachers are cared for became a central thread. And Michelle is also a co-author of the new book called Whole. So, I won't get into the research and how we got there, but that's a little bit of how I got here. Yay. Thank you. Yeah, I'm a lousy marketer, so. But I'm glad you are a good one and I take-- the journey has been incredible. But even more importantly, it's become autobiographical. I saw my children's experience through the lens of our research and it was really heartbreaking because our children are not typical. I've got a daughter with Asperger's and son with severe ADHD and another one who is just extremely introvert and they all have stories. They're all adopted, and so all of a sudden, I started seeing through the research that what they've experienced. I wish I knew then what I know now and so now the mission is to make sure nobody goes through what we went through in trying to navigate through a system that's not very friendly, not very humanizing, and in the end, damages teachers and kids.

Kathryn Kennedy: I think the relationship building peace, I know that a lot of the research that I do on online learning, specifically and especially since it's booming now with COVID, unfortunately, the relationship-building part is so crucial in order for us not to feel isolated. And I think that that has a lot to do with mental health conditions soaring even more so now because we are isolated, physically distanced, and not connecting in the usual ways that we do with people. So, I'm right there with everything that you've found in your research. And I do think a lot of the work that I've been working on through the Wellness for Educators stuff has been through trauma and stress and looking at Stephen Porges' Polyvagal Theory and how it's built around the idea of the vagus nerve and how it hits every single one of our major organs and how, if we're not taking care of ourselves, reducing our stress levels, healing our traumas, or at least sitting with them and not shoving them down like it's our tendency, especially coming out of a family-- from my perspective, my family-- we used to shove everything under the rug and continue to trip over it for the rest of our lives. And so, anything that was trauma related, we wouldn't deal with it or we were taught to not deal with it.

And so, I think that it's really important to learn-- like, Alejandra, you said, to learn those strategies to help us take care of ourselves and also to teach our students to be able to take care of themselves as well and be models for our colleagues too in our field. And the other thing that Dr. Porges mentions is the window of tolerance and how the practices of mindfulness and meditation and yoga and all of these other places like Qigong can help us build that window of tolerance so that we are able to be more resilient. So, I do want to have Rex and Michelle, you both, talk a little bit more about Whole because it did come out this year. Talk about timing. Especially with everything—

[crosstalk]. Yeah.

--yeah, everything that is happening, I don't think your timing could have been any better. And I know Rex you talked a little bit about this. But what was your impetus for the book? And also, what kind of things can people see in the book and learn from the book?

Rex Miller: Yeah. So, I'll share the origins, but I want to hand it off to Michelle to talk about the stress element that was really underlying. And, of course, stress goes into trauma as well. But we had finished the first book, gotten great feedback about humanizing the education machine. We did deal with social-emotional literacy and looking at adverse childhood experiences to inform what's happening to kids. I went to a leadership training workshop from a high-tech firm in New York City for educators. So, they do pro-bono leadership training. It's a little bit like little leaguers going to try out for the Yankees. I mean, this was a high-tech firm that had wonderful chef-prepared lunches, things teachers would never dream of ever being able to experience. But one of the things they did is they did resiliency tests on all the teachers. They did a blood pressure test, they did a balance test, and they did some other tests. On the last day, the founder of the company stopped everything and said, "We think we've blown it. We've shown you all this great stuff, but I want to share the results of the test." And out of 75 workshops, this was the lowest-rated group of any group they've ever done. And most of what they do is Air Force, military, high performing Navy SEALs, things like that and Fortune 500 companies. And he said, "75% of you, we don't know how you get up in the morning and 25% of you are ready to pop. So, my mind's processing disengagement. We just wrote a book that 70% of teachers are

disengaged. And I'm watching and say, "Whoa, what I'm seeing looks like disengagement but it's not, or maybe it's not, we didn't know." But I started thinking, "This doesn't add up because disengagement gives you the impression teachers don't care, and all the teachers we worked with care." But what we did find, teachers get out of the business because they're burned out. They can't take the stress anymore, the emotional burden of what's happening to their kids. And then they have this kind of survivors' remorse. I left but I left behind. So, I'm trying to weigh this, and I called the underwriter for the first book, his name is Bill Latham and he's a co-author here too, and I said, "Bill, what if it's not disengagement? What if it's battle fatigue? What if it's woundedness? It looks like it on the outside." And he said, "If that's the case, then years and years of engagement workshops in trying to motivate teachers, it's all been wasted." So that's when we began two years of research with over 130 educators and stakeholders and experts. We traveled to eight cities doing what we do, very immersive workshops. We went to Los Angeles, to Rise, it's a school for homeless in South Central L.A. 70% of their kids graduate and go to college. And these are homeless kids, 200 homeless kids that go there.

So, we wanted to see what are people doing in the toughest conditions that are getting positive results. And so that led us to a body of work. Michelle guided us through a lot of the social and emotional literacy. And one of the most memorable parts is the experiment she shared with us about my son. I'm going to let you share part of what we're missing and why it's so important right now is that-- almost half of teachers burnout before the first five years. Teaching is now considered to be the fourth most stressful occupation behind active military, behind police, law enforcement, behind emergency response, then it's teachers. And then fifth, it's working parents. So now you've got double whammy. So, we were looking at this and asking, "So what are schools doing? We saw a lot of good work?" And what Michelle showed us is all the good work being done in schools for kids and social-emotional literacy. And then, when I started looking at schools, we looked at 200 and asked, "What are you doing for your teachers?" "Zero, not one except for the Momentous Institute. So that's when we invited Michelle and say, "Look, nobody is taking care of the caregivers, and we call it the caregivers dilemma. They care so much. And if others come first, then by definition that means they come last." So, Michelle, I'm going to hand it off because you let us through a lot of how to take care of the caregivers in the role of stress, in shutting down or learning and performance.

Michelle Kinder: Yeah. I mean it's so tricky to not vilify anyone in the food chain, so to speak, because that's where my mind goes, to the that oppress the teachers that have created this issue that then make it difficult for them to create spaces for children to thrive. But if I can keep myself from being in sort of that looking-for-the-enemy mindset, then I can just see that it's a fear-based reaction. And our systems in education have gotten so swept by this fear-based mindset and this sort of hyper-focus on test grades and test scores and grades and these markers that may or may not have anything to do with long term success. And they've sort of shrunk into the space of, "If those things don't happen, then we are failing." And they're getting squeezed from other layers, so it's like just parallel process mania. And that's creating this unbelievable pressure cooker for teachers who, if we can figure out some ways to pull up from that energy and that mindset, know what to do. They know what to do for kids. They know what to do for each other. None of this is rocket science. All of this comes very naturally to educators. But the system is squeezing out our capacity to well attend to the well-being of the adults in the building,

and you can only give what you have. And so, we're asking depleted under-resourced adults to create safe spaces for children to thrive and that is not sustainable.

Rex Miller: And so, if you take the number and translate it, the 70% of disengaged, if you turn it into 70% overstressed, and then how does a child respond to an adult who's stressed? Well they either think, "You don't like me," or, "You're mad at me"? And so, we're really setting them up for a continued cycle on this. And I think we're at a perfect opportunity for a reset. I mean, how many districts are putting tests on the side? We've got other stressors now that we've got to deal with, but this is a chance now to break loose of the tyrant. And I'm in total agreement. It's a fear-based system. We talk to superintendents and their story is if, "I spend a dollar on teachers, the community's going to think I'm taking a dollar away from kids." So, they're fearful. And the board, I've got to report to the board. And the board is fearful because the parents have property values. And then that trickles into their expectations and their kids. You need to get into a good college and, so. And then there's the whole group that just gets left behind anyway. 50% of kids have no shot in our system, either 25% because of learning differences or 25% because of socioeconomic reasons.

Michelle Kinder: And race. And to say out loud, the quotas of one of the biggest spaces in inequity in our systems.

Rex Miller: So, my hope is that being brought to our knees with the system, it's interesting that the word, apocalypse, sounds nasty. But what it literally means is to expose. That's what it means, to reveal or expose. And I think we've exposed the inequities, the obsolescence of a system that is not leveraging digital learning, not being creative, and creating lifelong-- I mean, all these things have been exposed. And the care of teachers. That's really been exposed. So, I think this is a reset moment. At least, that's my hope.

Kathryn Kennedy: Yeah. I would hope for that as well. I know. Going back, Michelle, to something that you mentioned about learning loss and gaps and the stress around that. As a research consultant, I've seen RFP or request for proposal, after RFP talking about the need for help with learning loss and learning gaps. And there's such a negative connotation around that. You can take that on as an educator as a negative thing. What did I do to create this? And then, the student can also take that on as a negative thing. What did I do to do something wrong for this? And the same thing for caregivers too at home who were working with their students. Great. Now, what did I do? [laughter] It's kind of like the not-enough factor that Brené Brown and many others have talked about. It's completely out of control around that whole fear base. And what are those measures? Like you were saying, it's just really arbitrary when it comes down to it. It should be first, concentrating on social and emotional learning and well-being without the constant push through and pushing through and keep on going. And I saw an article recently about toxic positivity like everything is great. We're going to get through this. It's like we can't feel anything that we're feeling right now, and that's not healthy for any of us. So anyway, I would like to jump over to you, Alejandra. So, based on what has been said so far, what are you seeing around you as an educator?

Alejandra Ramos: Well, I think this is a space to be open and vulnerable, especially as an educator. These past few weeks, something happened to me as an educator that I didn't think

would happen. And I think I basically experienced burnout myself two weeks ago. I started feeling very sick, kind of fever. I kind of thought that it was related to COVID. It wasn't. And it was all related to stress, honestly, to stress and anxiety. I'm a teacher, and I think-- not just a teacher. I'm a person, in general, who likes to give it all to whatever I do. And right now, that's not possible. It's just not possible. We have too many factors. And it was a big wake-up call for me. I'm leading some social-emotional initiatives at school with the district, so it was kind of in a way ironic that I was the person talking about it and I'm suffering it myself.

And the savior for me was my mom. My mom is in Mexico and she called my doctor, found a way to help me all the way from over there. And that just really makes me think about how important parents and community members are. Because if it wasn't for her, I would probably still be burned out, not teaching anymore maybe. I thought that it was because I didn't want to do it anymore. And it wasn't that. I really needed a break. I'm very lucky to have administration who are very understanding. But I think that as teachers right now, the main thing is for us to be honest. And I really resonated with what you mentioned about toxic positivity because it does feel like that as teachers many times, that we are considered like superheroes, and even people will say, "You are our superheroes." Well, we are teachers, right? Superheroes don't exist and we are people and we're humans so moving I think from being honest-- from moving from that idea of we always have to be happy and we're going to be happy for the kids and we have to be positive to open up and say, "Hey I cannot do this this week. I'm feeling tired. I'm feeling sick," and just being really open. I know it's going to be different across schools and with teachers and the relationships that we built with our admins. But related to what you were all mentioning about being a moment for reset, I think it is a moment to be open about, there are all these things happening and I can't work. I can't function at the same level that I used to function last year because conditions are completely different. And they always talk about Maslow before Bloom's, right? And they always- but as teachers, if we don't have time to practice that, then it's just the toxic positivity. We're being told to practice SEL, to practice mindfulness in the classroom. But if we have a thousand other things, we are not present. And I attended a global conference for educators, and I was there actually this morning in a mental health session, and it was very interesting because we were from all different places, and people share their experiences with burnout and with all of that. And someone mentioned how-- I'm doing face to face and virtual, but people that are doing virtual-- that we're now working from home, but we're living at work.

And so, if we don't have time to stop, we really can't focus on that. So, I think now for teachers, we really need to be honest and we need to set our boundaries. And I know it's hard because we want to give it all, but it can be-- like for me, it's even telling the parents, "Hey, just a friendly reminder that my office hours are from this time and this time. If you message me outside of that, I'll respond once my office hours start again." And it's friendly and I'm being polite, but I'm setting those boundaries as a teacher that I think, especially this year, we need to. We need to set them. And also, for our students, we help them set those too. Like this is your time for studying, this is your time for your mindful moment, for eating and that way, they're not-- because we have that-- right? We want to push and push and push and we're also in a society that makes us think that the harder we work, the better it'll be. And we know we can work less and have a better product or a better result.

Kathryn Kennedy: Alejandra, going back to what you said about boundary setting, I think that is absolutely essential. I was an online teacher for a while before I shifted into consulting and so I totally get that. And especially working from home. Same thing. You're needing to set your boundaries really specifically. What have you experienced in terms of the response from once you have to set those boundaries? What is the response from different stakeholders that you work with, including students, parents, colleagues, that kind of thing?

Alejandra Ramos: Yes. I'm in a very, let's say fortunate position, that I'm with a group of people that I think really understand that, and I have a leader who really understands that. But I think maybe from other people, from other teachers, I know sometimes it's seen as-- we have this thing. Kind of-- I don't know how to explain it. We don't do it on purpose, but we have-- it's kind of like this little competition of who gets there first, who leaves the latest from work. Because we have this idea that the more you work, the better you are. And so, then we have these little things that maybe we don't see them, but we unconsciously do. And I think though, the hardest maybe reaction or response to this, it's from myself or from ourselves, because then we feel like failures. We feel like we're not doing our job good enough. That we're not being good enough teachers because we're not there all the time. With parents, I think they've been really understanding. Most of them. But it's been an explicit set of this is the time. This is what we do, and I've seen more respect from that. I think at first, it does take them a while because they-- if you're a teacher who always wants to help, or especially-- like me, I don't really have a family. I only have my cat. So, let's say I have-- I used to have more time to respond and help during the weekends, but this year is very different. So, I can't really have that. I really need to save my time for my personal health. So yeah, with them, it's been understanding, but I think mostly working with what I think of myself as a teacher and understanding that I can't do it all, and that doesn't mean that I'm going to be a good teacher and setting those priorities for myself.

Kathryn Kennedy: Thank you for that. I wanted to just take a minute to check in with anybody from the audience to see if they have any questions. Feel free to add them into the chat or raise your hand if you'd like to speak your question. All right. I'm going to open it up to Rex, Alejandro, and Michelle. If you guys wanted to ask any of each other questions that came up as each of you are talking feel free to do that as well.

Rex Miller: Well, Alejandra, I was interested in what support is your school providing? How do they help you? Are they coaching? Are they providing any kind of support or are you pretty much having to figure it out on your own?

Alejandra Ramos: So luckily, this year, the district where I work, they've invested a lot on social-emotional learning. So, they do have campus specialists. United to Learn has also been a partner that they have the social emotional learning initiative, and I'm leading that one at school. We do have the access, but I think that us teachers on every day work and life, even if we know they're there, we really don't have the time to approach. So, like if I—

Rex Miller: You guys are scheduled pretty tight?

Alejandra Ramos: Mm hmm. So maybe I do not-- in my school, we do it. There are certain times that is professional development. But I think in the future, they wanted to improve that it

could be more about time before we start school that they start investing on that time that we receive instead of now. Because it kind of feels like something that's being added on instead of something that can support what we're already doing.

Rex Miller: So, what I'm hearing is that there needs to be a little bit of change management in the process to be able to accommodate the training. Now the training-- the other question I have too is the nature of the training passing knowledge on or is it helping you develop the practice of taking care of yourself?

Alejandra Ramos: Yeah, the teacher trainings that I've attended, not only with the district, but outside of the district, as well, it's been mostly focused on what we teach our students, but I don't think it focuses enough on what we're doing for ourselves. And then I think of that idea, of filling someone else's cup but your cup is empty. So, it does feel like that sometimes. Especially in these times, I think everyone should be having some support with their wellbeing and mental health in or out of the classroom. So, I think as teachers, yeah, maybe it should be something completely separate then just what we're teaching our students because then we can lead by example.

Rex Miller: So, what Alejandra is describing is what we found in the 200 schools, is that teachers are learning a lot about how to take care of their kids. But what happens and Dr. John Gasco was part of this -- what happens is that that's an additional cognitive load for the teachers to have to learn skills, apply it, be measured on it. So that still feeds into the stress cycle. So, it doesn't relieve stress at all to know how to take care of others. [laughter] It does tell you where you're falling short if you're not. And I think that's part of the challenge in the conversation. Without a healthy and happy teacher, you can't have an engaged student it just doesn't happen. So anyway, I was kind of leading the witness, but that was a little bit of what I anticipated I might hear.

Michelle Kinder: When Alejandra was talking, she said, "This year is different." And I think that's a fundamental thing our systems are missing. They've done amazing work, kind of like patching the leaks and doing these Tetris-like schedules that are just stunning. And I mean, everyone is kind of performing heroic measures in terms of the overt application of the changes we've had to make. But what I think would be an interesting thought experiment, and not meant at all to minimize the complexity but just to kind of throw it out there, it would be amazing to me to hear from teachers if you were going to capitalize on the natural lessons that are happening this year, what would you be doing? Because in 2021, '22, '23, '24, whatever, we're not going to have the same landscape that's providing the natural lessons that could be creating more resilient, more optimistic, more grateful, more amazing, more problem-solving human beings that 2020 is creating for us. That instead of that, it's like, "Keep doing everything you're doing, but do it twice: in-person and virtual. And yeah, do the Depends we sent fit?" Like, no. It's too much. And we're completely missing the opportunity to go, "Yes. Everything is different. What do we have access to in terms of developing children and supporting each other that will require us to loosen our grip on the things we used to think were sacred?"

Rex Miller: I think the whole system is still going through five stages of grief of letting go and not getting to that death point of I can't recreate the past. The worst is over. It's the hero's

journey. The schools just aren't ready for it yet so they're going to deny and fight and bargain and all the burden. I love the natural learning opportunities because those are naturally engaging. They're real. They're relevant, and I love that as a model.

Kathryn Kennedy: Yeah, I agree. I think a lot of what you've been talking about, too, also lends itself to making sure that the educators' voices are heard in the process of the planning for all of these changes that are happening because I think oftentimes, teachers, specifically, are not included in those conversations and how frustrating that can be as a teacher to essentially just be told, "This is how it's going to go. This is how it's going to be. You're here to serve your students," but maybe not getting the support that you need specifically and also providing a platform for your voice to be heard as well. I think that's critical, and I find it to be-- in the work that I do as an education consultant researcher, I consistently hear that. It's like, "Okay. Have you asked the teachers? Have you--?" "Nope. Nope. Nope." It's like, "That's the critical part." And I mean, even students, too. And going back, Michelle, to one of the very important points that you brought up about equity and racism that's happening right now, that is critical to make sure that teachers have a voice, that students have a voice, that community members a voice and that their caregivers have a voice in what changes happened to the system because that is a whole another stressor that we need to take into account. So, I appreciate all of your input on that. One of the things that I'd like to ask is, kind of going to the tools and strategies part, what can educators do for their own practice either for themselves and/or with their students? And oftentimes they can go in both directions and their students' families. What kind of tools and strategies have you seen with the educators that you're working with or Alejandra within your district or around the area that you live in?

Alejandra Ramos: Yes. Okay. Yeah. I could share things kind of related to what I shared earlier, but I think that as teachers first being honest with ourselves is really important, to also to learn how to listen to our bodies because sometimes we're just being pushed to do do do do do, and we're not really paying attention, we're not being mindful because we don't have the time to be mindful sometimes. So, taking the time to listen to our bodies, setting those boundaries, those limits, not only with people but also with the amount of work. I know it's really hard because we always have more things to do but specially this year, we really need to set a time of, after this time, I won't do any work. Maybe I won't take it home. This day is for my personal, for something that I enjoy doing and it's not a responsibility. We really need to set that. And I think with the students, it's a lot about, I guess, the choice, teaching them those practices right if it's-- for example, I always start with a sharing circle in the morning always and whether it is virtual or face to face, and they know that that's a safe space where they can speak up and they can share, but many times maybe at the beginning, I do lead it. I work with little ones with five and six-year-olds. So, at first, I will lead it. I'll ask questions. I'll do breathing practices, but it gets to a point where I have them lead or maybe I'll have someone that helps me, "Okay. What breathing exercise do you want to do today?" And one of them will lead. And that way, they know that it's a practice that it's not only something that I say that will do, but it's something that they can take outside of the classroom.

And I think another really important thing is to take into account that-- like Michelle was mentioning with race and with other factors because it's very different the way that I would approach, let's say, wellbeing with-- like me, my experience being a Mexican immigrant, I know

that with my family or people that have a similar experience that I have wellbeing will be I would introduce it in a different way because I know our experiences are different. And it is complex but as teachers-- and it can be seen as another thing to do. But it'll help us later on once we get to know more of their families, what they-- even introduce. I always introduce social-emotional learning to the parents; I'll send a little flier and I'll say what it means. So, they don't think that it's, "Oh, it's just a teacher meditating and teaching them to breathe." But how does that help them teach students to how does that help them? I even show them people that do different things. I have a friend who's a gamer, and I'll show them, "Oh, he meditates, too." People that do different things meditate or have a mindful moment, but really kind of moving it outside of the classroom, so it becomes a whole community goal, and it's not just the teacher carrying all the weight of caring for all these people and helping them be their own leaders, and that's Emotional learning component.

Rex Miller: Mine's simple, sleep. Get a good night's sleep. I mean that probably has the biggest impact on health, physical health, emotional state, cognitive performance, and the nation is already sleep-deprived. But the habits of good sleep. Whether it's reading *Why We Sleep* by Matthew Walker. Whether it's using a tracker you know Michelle's got-- I don't know if you're wearing your tracker. There you go.

And so, one of the challenges that I learned and discovered is that our bodies adjust to the level that we can-- so if you've got-- if all you're getting is a half a tank of gas, your performance, and everything adjusts to that. But you don't know that you've got this other possibility. And so, unless you've got some device that says, "Oh, you thought you've got a good night's sleep, but here's your recovery level." You just don't know. And that's what those teachers in the very first thing they didn't know that they were what they called, suboptimal. That they had mentally and emotionally adjusted to this is what it's like. When they started sharing the results, the body language in that room was just people's shoulders drew. People started breathing. Then the cathartic conversations.

Someone said, "Excuse the language here. So, I'm not supposed to feel like shit every day." So, one thing to take away, get a good quality night's sleep. If you're getting less than-- if you're in bed less than seven hours, then you're legally drunk. That's your brain. Because you're not getting full seven hours of sleep. If you're in bed for seven hours, you may be getting five and a half, six hours of sleep. But we also have to know, the kids are the same. And when they move into adolescence their sleep circadian rhythm goes back two hours. So, when we get them up at 6:00 in the morning, it's like getting us up at 3:00 in the morning. And the research shows that maybe up to 50% of kids that are medicated for ADD, it's sleep deprivation that looks like ADD.

So anyway, that's my one thing. Sleep.

Michelle Kinder: Well, that's a good one. And in order to kind of lean into that suggestion, teachers have to confront and turn off all the narratives in their head about what excellence looks like, about what success looks like, about what's expected even in a frickin pandemic. Like all of those things have to be acknowledged and dismissed. Acknowledged and dismissed. I like to picture one of those motorcycles with the sidecar sort of like, "I see you, get in the sidecar. I know your here but I'm going to drive. You are not allowed to drive anymore." Because if you

have those two dueling, you will never set-- you will never prioritize sleep. You'll never buy into what all the research says. You'll always say, "Oh, but I could laminate this landscape and portrait." Like you could drive yourself nuts.

So, I think that's one piece. And my suggestion always if you can only focus on one thing is to regulate your own nervous system. And that looks a lot of different ways but the most researched, most accessible way to breathe and to bring those moments of recalibration into your day even when you're brushing your teeth or when you're starting or stopping your car and really kind of taking the time to teach your body what baseline feels like again. And then coax it back there instead of allowing it to stay in that flight or freeze indefinitely. And two more things if it's okay. One is I think I would just beg teachers to trust themselves and to sort of drop into their own intuition of what they need and what their colleagues need and what their kids need. Right now, everyone is leaking and fraying. Nobody is in an optimal state. And so, kids are desperate for regulated adults to be in their presence virtually or literally. And so, if there's anything we can do is offer the experience of co-regulation, which means my nervous system is calm and I can create a space for you to learn to calm your own nervous system. If I can do that and I only get halfway through the alphabet in 2020, you're winning. But if I decide no, I'm going to cover every ounce of content I always do when there's nothing external happening, you may or may not get through the content. The absorption of the content will not happen. The social-emotional development will not happen. And so, it's sort of like you got a pick.

And then the last thing I'll say I want to share a quote with you all that has really been profound for me around this self-care conversation. And it's a quote from Nikita Valerio. She says shouting self-care at people who actually need community care is how we fail people. And so yes, there's a million things each of us can do every day to improve our wellness. But it's two train tracks. There's the individual personal work, and then there's the systemic organizational work. And this cannot let this off the hook. And so, it's both it's self-care but it's also community care.

Rex Miller: It's good.

Kathryn Kennedy: Yeah. All of those things I would-- one of the things that I wrote down is to continue to add to your toolkit of everything that you guys just mentioned and have a community of supportive people, like you said Michelle, to really tap in to and to know you're not alone. Have therapy sessions of just like is it just me or is-- I think that is always helpful. And then having a mantra based on whatever that you're feeling or you're working through. The idea that I'm not doing enough or things like that, that's one of mine that is just it's a constant tape that I've been working on. So just having some kind of a mantra like I am enough, I've done enough, I am enough. I am a whole being. And going back to the whole idea of whole. And then also as a technology advocate, obviously, I love technology, but we have so many inputs right now and especially for educators who are new to the technology scene. This is a learning curve of this. And so, thinking about, again, Alejandra going back to your point about boundary setting. We have to have boundary-setting also on our workspaces and our technology devices. Shutting off all the devices at a certain time. Not checking them constantly and having a separate space if possible, for those things just so that you're not constantly seeing it and thinking oh, I wonder if. Oh, just in case. I want to make sure. Because again we're always thinking like how can we help

people but at the same time, back to Alejandra and what you mentioned about being able to fill your own cup first so that you can fill the cups of others or the airline putting on your mask first before that you can support others is so important. So, thank you all. We have about 10 minutes and I would love Alejandra if you are up for it to share a mindfulness practice. I have one as well and I feel so badly that Ebony was not able to join us today but hopefully, she'll join us for another webinar to do one of hers but I'll go ahead and do one in her spot. So, I'm going to hand it over to Alejandra.

Alejandra Ramos: Yes. So maybe I'll share a couple that can be done with the students and then we'll do one together. So, the first one that I do with the students and this when you can do it if you want. I work with little ones but also the older students like it. It's the one with the flower and the candle. So, you huele la flor, you smell the flower. Apaga la vela, blow out the candle. Huele la flor. Apaga la vela. And they love that one. They love it. All my students love it.

There's another one that I really enjoy with the five senses. So [in Spanish] So, we just do--first we're sitting down. So, we do five things that we can see. [in Spanish] and I'm just going to say it but I would ask students to first where they're sitting to look at the five things that they can see ... So, have that moment to be mindful then four things [in Spanish] Four things around them that they can touch so they would maybe feel how their clothes is moving next to their skin or if they can touch maybe the table where they're sitting and just have those four things that they can feel and then three things that they can hear [in Spanish] So just around them. I know I can hear the air conditioner and my cat is kind of snoring next to me. Then two things that they can smell and lastly, one thing that they can taste and for that students can-- if they're doing virtual, they really love it. I'll ask them to bring maybe something that there's some juice or their favorite meal and then they'll taste that. And the last one, the last practice, there's one in English they do. In with confidence, out with doubt but I do it in Spanish. So then when we'll put our hands here in our heart [in Spanish] and we breathe in and then my students would say confianza which means confidence and then [in Spanish] Last one. In with confidence. Out with doubt.

Kathryn Kennedy: Those are beautiful. I absolutely loved that candle-flower one. That was so great. Okay, so I will lead everybody into a loving-kindness meditation. So, we're going to look at thinking about four different people. So, go ahead and just-- if you're sitting or you're standing, however you want to do it, go ahead and gently close your eyes if you're comfortable doing so. If not, you can just have your gaze gently on whatever point you'd like. We're just going to continue to breathe, making each breath in deeper than the last.

And the first person I'd like you to focus on and to bring into your heart center is a person that you consider a loved one. So, choose the person that you consider a loved one and bring them into your heart center and internally, or out loud if you'd like to, you can say, "May you be at peace. May you be healed, and may your heart remain open. May you be at peace. May you be healed, and may your heart remain open."

And now we're going to move on to someone who might not be somebody that you know very well. It might be someone at the local grocery store or perhaps at the mail post office wherever, but it's an acquaintance. You see them regularly, but you don't know them personally. And we're going to say the same mantra to them as well. "May you be at peace. May you be healed, and

may your heart remain open. May you be at peace. May you be healed. May your heart remain open."

And now I'd like you to choose a person who you might have a little bit of difficulty working with or being with, bringing them into your heart center and saying the same mantra. "May you be at peace. May you be healed. May your heart remain open. May you be at peace. May you be healed. May your heart remain open."

And last but certainly not least, we're going to bring ourselves into our heart center, and we're going to say the same mantra. "May I be at peace. May I be healed. May my heart remain open."

And take one more deep breath in and exhaling out. And if your eyes are closed, gently opening the eyes. And we are right at about time, so I would like to take this time to thank you, Rex, Alejandra, and Michelle for being here and for our audience. Thank you so very much for being here. We do have the recording that will be sent out. We are also going to have a transcription made, so it might be a little bit longer for us to get everything together, but we will have a transcript that will go along with the recording. So, thank you all for joining us, and please take good care of yourselves.

Thank you.

Thank you, everybody.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.