

FROM SURVIVAL TO “THRIVAL”

TOOLS TO MANAGE THE
PSYCHOLOGICAL STRAIN OF SPECIAL
EDUCATION TEACHING



CHRISTIAN SABEY, PHD BCBA-D

TOOL #1

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1. Take time to identify the values that lead you to become and remain a special educator.
 2. Make a list of those values. Identify the three that are most important/meaningful to you this coming semester.
 3. Write them on a poster and display the poster in a prominent place in your classroom.
 4. Take two minutes a day to reconnect with those values in a heartfelt way.

List the values that are important to you as a special educator: _____

Pick the three values that are most important/meaningful to you this semester:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Make a poster. Display it in a prominent place in your classroom. Move the poster at least once a month so that you do not habituate to it.

Did you spend 2 minutes connecting with your values today?

Week	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
1					
2					
3					
4					

TOOL #2

1. **5 Things:** Notice 5 things that you can see and name them (e.g., “pencil”). Try to note things that you don’t normally notice or things that are unusual. Now notice 5 things you can hear. Now notice 5 things you can smell. Now notice 5 things you can feel/touch.
2. **Deep Breaths:** Take 3-5 deep breaths and notice if you feel anything different. Where do you feel different? How do you feel different?
3. **Body Scan:** Pay attention to your left foot. How does it feel? Is it cold or hot, dry or damp, relaxed or tense? Just notice how it feels. Repeat with as many body parts as you like
4. **Breath Counting:** Without trying to change your breathing, start counting each breath. When you get to 10, start back at 1. Do this two or three times.

5. **Muscle Tensing:** Squeeze your right fist as tight as you can for 3 seconds, then let it go. Now, squeeze your left fist as tight as it will go for 3 seconds, then let it go. Now, curl your toes on your right foot as tight as you can for 3 seconds, then let it go. Repeat with your left foot, your legs, arms, stomach, face, etc. for as long or short as you like.

TOOL #3

1. Take a look at the values you identified in Tool #1.
2. Rate each value on a scale from 1 to 100 in terms of how well you are living consistent with that value.
3. Identify one simple action you could take to act more consistent with that value.
4. Check-in at the end of the day to evaluate how you did acting consistent with your values.
5. **NOTE:** Do NOT use this as an opportunity to beat yourself up or berate yourself. Just notice and recommit where necessary.

Value 1: _____ (1-100)

What can I do to act more consistent with this value?

Check-in: How did I do today? How could I improve?

Value 2: _____ (1-100)

What can I do to act more consistent with this value?

Check-in: How did I do today? How could I improve?

Value 3: _____ (1-100)

What can I do to act more consistent with this value?

Check-in: How did I do today? How could I improve?

Defusion: You are not what you think

TOOL #4

1. "I'm having a thought that..." or "I'm having a feeling that..."
2. Label the story (e.g., Oh, this is the *Worst kid in the school* story).
3. Thank your mind.
4. Ask yourself, "Is this though/feeling helpful?", if not, let it go.
5. Repeat the thought over and over again for 30 seconds.

FOR MORE, SEE BELOW

Harris, R. (2008). ***The Happiness Trap: How to stop struggling and start living.*** Boston, MA: Trumpeter.

Harris, R. (2011). ***The Confidence Gap: A Guide to Overcoming Fear and Self-Doubt.*** Boston, MA: Trumpeter Books.

Hayes, S. (2019). ***A Liberated Mind: How to Pivot Toward What Matters.*** New York: Avery.

www.calm.com

www.headspace.com

www.thehappinesstrap.com

www.totempd.com (see COVID Compendium)