

# Habits of **RESILIENT** EDUCATORS

Strategies for  
Thriving During  
Times of Anxiety,  
Doubt, and  
Constant Change



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# Introduction

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## WHY THIS BOOK? WHY YOU?

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In a contemporary teaching environment filled with stresses imposed by a generational pandemic, the already complex work of teaching has become even more challenging. Teachers today are faced with regular, unpredictable interruptions to learning, increasingly emotional demands from parents and caretakers, greater intervention by policymakers into curriculum and instruction, and an overall climate that cultivates fear, uncertainty, and doubt (FUD)—three psychological stressors known to spread false information and lead to apathy and burnout.

During a time when many educators are leaving the profession, others have rolled up their sleeves and are shining brightly through the challenges and pressures of the tumultuous education landscape. Countless others are just entering the field, eager to contribute and make an impact on the lives of their students. So we asked the question: What do teachers need to know and understand about the intersection of professional and personal practices to foster their own wellbeing while providing utmost effective teaching and learning in the classroom?

This book endeavors to present practices that meet the modern educator where they are: employed in a field at the intersection of mundanity and sainthood. The chapters ahead will guide you to examine research-proven teaching pedagogy and draw connections to how those practices, when implemented routinely within structures so that they become habits, can become optimal effective and efficient patterns in your professional life.

This book draws on our direct experience of more than forty combined years working in schools and districts. Most recently working as coaches alongside teachers and leaders around the globe, we observed firsthand how educators navigated making this new learning environment work for them. Throughout these pages, we draw on stories of resilience and clever adaptation to understand what being a high-functioning educator looks like in the twenty-first century and beyond. Combining these stories with a robust body of research on the habits of effective

teaching and leadership, this book offers a rigorous and uplifting view of the difference educators can make even among all the contemporary stressors prevalent in schools.

Across the country, there is a sense of hopelessness around the ability to change this culture of chaos, and schools may struggle to find teachers for years to come. We must shift the narrative. Teaching can and should be a joyful profession where practitioners feel a sense of pride and accomplishment in their work. As a team of eternal optimists with deep experience and endless admiration for teachers, we aim to empower new and aspiring educators—or those with years of experience whose hope has waned—with a framework that enables them to regain control of their mindset and their practice despite the multitude of factors outside their control that they encounter daily.

## THE INTERSECTION OF TEACHER AND STUDENT WELLBEING: WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

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Education researcher John Hattie points to collective efficacy as one of the most impactful influences on student outcomes and the most consistently influential factor within teachers' control. Teacher collective efficacy is the belief held by teachers that they can make an impact on student performance (Goddard et al., 2020). This construct links to the broader observation of sociocultural theory, that we all have a broad network of influences that encourage or discourage us from believing in our ability to affect change. The habits of effective teaching described here all focus on creating a positive and supportive network of influences that can enable those beliefs for individual teachers and support them in creating that social context for their peers. In this way, we hope to show these habits aren't "life hacks" capable of solving any problem but small practices that collectively create a context within which teachers can grow and develop their own self-efficacy. This book will articulate strategies and practices that will support not only the preservation of teacher collective efficacy but ensure that it thrives.

Extending the importance of teacher self- and collective efficacy, research suggests that it also positively influences students' academic adjustment, overall job satisfaction for teachers, and even classroom quality. For example, studies have found that teacher self-efficacy may have a reciprocal effect on both teachers' and students' feelings of wellbeing and personal accomplishment (Bandura, 1997; Goddard et al., 2004). As you develop your own expertise and cultivate your

wellbeing simultaneously, you are likely to extend the positive impacts of your efforts to the classroom environment and thus to your students. Teachers are more likely to experience high self-efficacy when they routinely practice self-regulation strategies—such as seeking help or support, setting goals, orienting their work toward mastery, or engaging in personal learning (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Bandura (1997) emphasized the crucial importance of teachers' beliefs that they have the skills and capabilities to selectively support their students where needed. The chapters within this book offer an opportunity to cultivate habits of behavior that build confidence by internalizing the thinking skills and high-frequency actions of teachers, such as making effective decisions or organizing immense amounts of complex information. In turn, teachers will be empowered to feel confident and capable of navigating any challenge they are faced with no matter the chaos of their surroundings or the uncertainty of what new challenges they'll face in the classroom tomorrow. The figure that follows shows the habits that resilient educators embody.

**FIGURE 0.1**



## HOW YOUR HABITS INFLUENCE YOUR IMPACT AS AN EDUCATOR

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When you think of habits, perhaps you think of actions related to your personal life—managing your finances, exercising regularly, or perhaps even daily functions—such as always putting your car keys in the same place when you arrive home. Merriam-Webster (2023) defines a habit as, “a behavior pattern acquired by frequent repetition that shows itself in regularity or increased facility of performance.” A habit must be acquired, indicating that to develop new habits we must be intentional about their development. Author Clear (2018) describes habits as “the compound interest of self-improvement” in his bestseller *Atomic Habits*, and it is upon this premise that we encourage you to approach your learning with this book. When you purposefully engage in the repetitive practice of behaviors or skills that have proven to have a positive impact on your wellbeing and on the learning outcomes of your students, they become seamless and so easy to implement that they cease to require much thought or precious energy. When these habits—a blend of personal behaviors applied to professional strategies—become automatic, they enable teachers to exert focus and effort on far more important and cognitively demanding priorities—such as the assessment of student learning. Embedding habits framed in these chapters—such as effective decision-making, avoiding negative influences, or cultivating mental resilience—provides the foundation upon which you can then easily overcome uncertainty and withstand constant ambiguity.

Further, habits are a catalyst for continuously improving your craft as a teacher and feeling confident and in control of your life. When the process of practicing new skills becomes less exciting or perhaps even boring, you’ll know the novelty has dissipated; but this is a crucial time to persist. The intent is for these skills to become so easy and fluid that they are nearly mindless. When you cease to feel as though you are doing something unique or novel, it’s time to celebrate a win—you’ve likely developed a new habit! Though perhaps seemingly minor, collectively developing the habits within these chapters will lead you toward mastery of an entire series of expert practices that will enable you to artfully navigate even the most cataclysmic changes to the school environment or field of education, as if you were effortlessly sailing along on a smooth sea.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

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Whether you are reading this book independently or with the support of fellow educators around you, the chapters within are each an entry point into a multitude of opportunities to apply

and practice the habit that you are examining. They are meant to be experienced in daily practice in order to fully immerse yourself in your personal understanding of what aspects of each habit yield the utmost outcomes for your growth as an educator.

In Chapter 1, you will examine how purpose connects to educator wellbeing and recognize where learning to develop the habit of returning to your *why* as an educator is critical to sustaining fulfillment and success in a career that possesses some of the highest rates of burnout.

Chapter 2 takes you on a journey through the unique merits of collaborating with others to understand not only why educators can elevate their impact by working together but how specific practices are proven to ensure collaboration moves beyond simply sharing work responsibilities.

In Chapter 3, we begin unpacking the habit of establishing and upholding high expectations for all students. By examining the influences of bias, for example, you will learn not only where to focus your efforts but how to do so in a consistent and intentional manner so that instruction is equitable for every student.

Chapter 4 explores the ever-important habit of utilizing data to drive decisions in the classroom. We will lift out straightforward, high-impact practices and streamline data processes to help you ensure your efforts to set high expectations for all students, for example, are utmost effective.

In Chapter 5, you will learn to apply the habit of utilizing routines and procedures across all areas of your teaching practice. In doing so, you set the stage to maximize effective use of your time and create opportunities for applying the remaining habits learned in the book.

Chapter 6 will begin bringing all of your newly developed habits from earlier chapters into the art of setting goals for your long-range personal and professional development. You'll recognize strategies for applying goal setting for both you and your students that ensure success for all.

In Chapter 7, you will spend time reflecting on your growth thus far through a focus on feedback. You will also learn how to seek and apply various sources of input and accelerate your growth journey.

If your learning around each habit thus far has you feeling daunted at the prospect of mastering them all, Chapter 8 will

help you filter your learning and organize your efforts through the art of prioritization. You'll learn how to declutter both personal demands and professional ones.

As the book is situated to support you in navigating the new “normal” of education—constant fear, uncertainty, and doubt—Chapter 9 presents skills around the habit of avoiding negativity. You'll examine how to identify root causes of negative influences and apply skills in navigating them effectively so you may not only survive but thrive.

Chapter 10 concludes the book with the habit of developing and applying resilience. As a key factor to ensuring happiness, satisfaction, and fulfillment in your career as an educator, these final practices offer opportunities for application across each of the other habits in the book.

As you consider the content of the book, you'll recognize connections across each chapter that may compel you to return to the first chapter on “Clarify Your Why” for reflection opportunities even when you are deep into nearly the last chapter on “Prioritizing Amidst a Sea of Initiatives.” Let the learning progression evolve organically for you—no need to proceed methodically from one chapter to the next unless that best suits your interest! For maximum effect, step away from reading the chapter pages to put the strategies into practice in your classroom or office. Then, return to reflect on the experience and delve into the next activity for even deeper learning about the chapter's habit of focus.

## **TAKE YOURSELF ON A PERSONAL GROWTH JOURNEY**

If you find yourself reading this book on your own, consider it your new companion to lead you toward the exciting goal of thriving, not just surviving, as an educator. Test your confidence, expand your imagination, and challenge conventional wisdom around how teachers are expected to mindlessly function under exorbitant levels of stress for the duration of their career. You'll engage in research-proven practices that help you organize your time, streamline your efficiency, and maximize your impact on student learning outcomes. Leverage the activities in the “Setting Goals” chapter, for example, as you practice new skills in utilizing data to drive your decision-making processes from Chapters 3 and 8, and become a master of propelling your own learning as well as your students' learning.

## COLLABORATE WITH A MENTOR, COACH, PLC, OR COHORT

The content of this book lends itself well to application in a setting with the perspective and expertise of fellow educators around you. Whether you are working through the chapters in an induction program, reading the book with a professional learning community (PLC) in your school or district, or teaming up with a mentor to support your learning, it's important to situate your approach with a mindset of collaboration and a focus on growth. Despite the tremendous expertise you certainly bring with you to the learning journey, be ready to set aside assumptions and preconceived ideas about your ability to become even better. To create new habits or routines in your practice, you'll likely need to disrupt existing patterns and beliefs, and that can be challenging or even uncomfortable. We recommend setting learning intentions each time you engage in reading a new chapter or collaborating with others around what you are learning. Prioritize being open, receptive, and curious, and you will maximize the impact of your learning journey for yourself and for your students!

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## REFLECTION

Get Ready, Set Your Intentions, and  
Go Improve!

**MY LEARNING INTENTIONS FOR READING  
THIS BOOK ARE ...**

1.

2.

3.

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