

The Summer of Self-Care

In 2017, National Public Radio reported on the existence of a "Millennial Obsession with Self Care" (Silva 2017). Apparently, adults between the ages of 18 and 35 are more committed to self improvement than any previous generation. While many of us who are older can recall crazy diets, and even strange work-out equipment, the Internet guaranteed the term self-care is in the zeitgeist. Reader, we can hear you now: "Please don't tell me I need to add yet another stack of skills to my overwhelming burden! I thought self-care in the summer meant relaxing and recharging! Preferably with a beach trip!"

Not to worry. Self-care, and the growth it spurs in your own professional well-being, is not a collection of tasks you should check off of an already long to-do list. Instead, think of it as a series of strategies that help scaffold, strengthen, and sustain you through your conquering of those to-do's. The School of Social Work at the University of Buffalo, New York, defines self-care as: "activities and practices we engage in on a regular basis to reduce stress and maintain and enhance our short- and longer-term health and well-being...necessary for [our] effectiveness and success in honoring [our] professional and personal commitments." As the school's website explains, practicing self-care helps you "identify and manage the general challenges that all hard-working professionals face, such as the potential for stress and burnout or interpersonal difficulties" (University of Buffalo 2018).

Professional challenges are most certainly a facet of school librarianship. In her *School Library Research* article, "Assimilation or Humiliation? An Analysis of Professional Identities after Critical Events in the Workplace," Julie Frye describes how professional growth and identity formation is a tense process for educators. This is because educators spend much of their time comparing and contrasting their academic training and professional philosophy with the actual day-to-day workings of their school. In her examination of how critical events shape school librarian professional identity, Frye concluded that school librarians are especially prone to "feelings of loneliness, self-doubt, and defeat" because "formal, customized professional development systems within schools rarely exist for school librarians" (Frye 2018, 2).

Frye points out that when these isolated school librarians encounter critical events (such as a slash in budget, a book challenge, or an administrator who prioritizes clerical duties over instructional leadership), instead of pursuing mentoring from a classroom teacher who probably does not understand what school librarians do, they internalize the professional challenge, a practice that hurts "their ability to emerge as school leaders and curriculum experts" (2).

While several of Frye's recommendations for addressing professional isolation and emotional well-being are within the control of individual librarians (e.g. changes in academic coursework), several can be integrated into your routine, including one-to-one time with other school librarians and school library mentors and the development of your own professional learning network (PLN). Instead of waiting for a critical event to happen, use this summer to establish your self-care practices. A great way to begin this process is by harnessing the positive aspects of social media.

Social media and self care might seem like an unlikely pairing, but from a professional standpoint, social media can actually be an excellent way to connect with colleagues over the summer, yet maintain balance in your personal life. The anytime, anywhere aspect of your PLN means you can watch a webinar while you relax at the beach or listen to a podcast while you hike in the woods. Topics aren't limited to what's being offered in a course catalog and many online learning opportunities involve little or no cost. Here are a few suggestions for using social media at your own pace, on your own terms, to engage with work related topics:

1. Create Pinterest boards to collect resources that will help your future self navigate the topics that frazzled you last year. By engaging with these issues over the summer when your mind is clear and your body has had some rest, you might gain a new perspective. Let your purpose not only be to become more informed on these issues, but also to start formulating a plan for how you'll handle them if they come up again. Rather than panicking and scrambling for information, you'll remain calm in the realization that you're prepared with planning materials and advice from experts that are just a few clicks away. Here are some resources you can pin right now on a handful of hot button issues:

Book Challenges

Cooperative Children's Book Center <https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/freedom/default.asp>

ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom <http://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/oif>

Advocacy with Administrators

AASL School Librarians as Learning Leaders <http://www.ala.org/aasl/advocacy/tools/leaders>

Library Research Service <https://www.lrs.org/>

Funding/Staffing Crisis

AASL School Library Crisis Toolkit <http://www.ala.org/aasl/advocacy/tools/toolkits/crisis>

Save School Librarians <http://www.saveschoollibrarians.org/>

2. Connect with other school librarians on Facebook, Twitter, or blogs when you have a question, need an idea, want to trade advice or discuss the latest trends. New graduates, experienced veterans and everyone in between will find creativity, inspiration and encouragement when consulting the hive:

The School Librarian's Workshop on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/57409801076/>

#TLChat on Twitter <https://twitter.com/hashtag/TLChat?src=hash>

Or try this listing of Top School Library Blogs <https://www.teachercertificationdegrees.com/top-blogs/school-library/>

3. Indulge in some uninterrupted pleasure reading. Whether you're looking for new favorites in your go-to genre, interested in trying a new genre or searching for read alikes of a beloved title or author, these sites will provide an unending list of suggestions.

Goodreads <https://www.goodreads.com/>

What Should I Read Next <http://www.whatshouldireadnext.com/>

Your Next Read <http://www.yournextread.com/>

We hope your summer is full of opportunities to engage in self-care. Cheers to resting, recharging, and re-invigorating our professional practice!

Works Cited

Frye, Julie Marie. "Assimilation or Humiliation? An Analysis of Professional Identities After Critical Events in the Workplace." *School Library Research* 21 (2018). <http://www.ala.org/aasl/slr/volume21/frye>

Silva, Christianna. "The Millennial Obsession with Self-Care." National Public Radio (June 4, 2017). <https://www.npr.org/2017/06/04/531051473/the-millennial-obsession-with-self-care>

University of Buffalo School of Social Work. Introduction to Self-Care: Whether You Are a Student or a Professional Working in the Field, Self-Care Matters!. <https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/self-care-starter-kit/introduction-to-self-care.html> (accessed May 9, 2018).

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