MIKE ANDERSON

REKINDLE YOUR PROFESSIONAL FIRE

Powerful Habits for Becoming a More Well-Balanced Teacher

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REKINDLE YOUR PROFESSIONAL FIRE

1

How We Got Here—and Our Pathway Out

"Self-care is never a selfish act—it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others. Anytime we can listen to [our] true self and give it the care it requires, we do so not only for ourselves but for the many others whose lives we touch."

—Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*

It was my eighth year of teaching when I realized I was burning out.

The first few years of my career were a happy blur. I was passionate about teaching and took a lot of pride in how often parents told me that their children loved coming to school. The hard work and long hours didn't bother me. After all, I knew that teaching was going to be hard work. Both of my parents were teachers. Mom spent Sunday afternoons planning for the week ahead, and I sometimes joined her on afternoons after school and Saturdays in her 3rd grade classroom, cutting out block letters for bulletin boards or helping clean the room. Dad was a professor of music at Bates College, and I spent many an afternoon as a young kid playing in empty classrooms while he finished office work, met with students, and slogged through department meetings. He spent hours on weekends and evenings grading papers, especially as semesters closed down. I remember biking in circles around the college chapel as he rehearsed for upcoming organ recitals and choir concerts.

So I threw myself into the work of being a 4th grade teacher, taking pride in staying at school late into the evenings. I made sure to get the access code to the school security system so that I could enter the building on the weekends to plan and clean my room. There was always so much to do.

Back then, at least in my school, teachers had a ton—maybe even too much—freedom. But I loved it. There were math books stacked in the back of the room, but no one in my school really used the program

because it was so dry and dated. So I created my own units, lessons, and materials. We also had science texts that were pretty low level and boring, so I created units of study based on the chapters of the text I wasn't using. We had no real schoolwide approach to literacy instruction, which gave me free rein to try everything I'd learned in college. I set up a reading and writing workshop where students had power and control over what they read and wrote. There was incredible freedom, but that also meant a ton of planning: crafting a scope and sequence, inventing lessons, and creating and collecting materials. Couple this with the two part-time swim coaching jobs I took on, and I worked a lot.

Most days I'd get to school two hours before students arrived to get set for the day. After school, I'd hustle to the pool to coach into the evening. Then, I'd head back to school for another couple of hours before finally heading back to my apartment to crash for the night. Most weekends were split between swim meets and planning, organizing, and cleaning sessions at school.

It was exhausting, but it was also exhilarating. My students and I dove into independent research projects, and I figured out how to facilitate them through trial and error. We adopted a pet snake (a ball python that a precocious student named "Monty"—thanks, Justin). We constructed tissue paper hot air balloons and launched them on the playground. We took mini field trips to local farms and businesses for social studies. Students read books of their choice, and we wrote and self-published tons of stories. I loved teaching—in all of its messy, frustrating, and rewarding glory.

I didn't even really mind the exhaustion, at least not at first. But I also assumed that as I got further into my career, things would ease up. I'd be able to reuse units I'd previously created. I'd have systems in place that would help me feel more settled. I'd have more time on weekends to rest, relax, and exercise. Teaching would still be challenging, but it wouldn't be quite so overwhelming.

There were some other reasons I was so tired—connected with, but not totally caused by—my intense work hours.

For one thing, I wasn't eating very well. I struggled to force myself to go grocery shopping, so I ate way too much junk food. There were four fast-food chains in the 10-minute drive from where I lived to my school,

and it was way too easy to stop for meals before and after school. For lunch, I often ate peanut butter and jelly sandwiches on white bread from the school cafeteria and washed them down with chocolate milk.

I also wasn't exercising. Swimming had been my sport from elementary school through college, but by the time I graduated my shoulders were toast, so swimming was out for a while. I was so busy that I didn't carve out time for other forms of exercise.

I wasn't sleeping well, either. Filling up on empty carbs, not exercising, and having a stressful job was taking its toll. When I was in my mid-20s, I was developing joint pain and stiffness, losing muscle mass, and gaining unhealthy weight.

Amid all of this, I got married and started a family. I thought I was tired before? Ha! Our son was almost 2 when our daughter was born. With two little ones at home, I couldn't and didn't want to spend whole Saturdays puttering in my classroom cleaning, organizing, and planning. At the same time, it was harder to get any schoolwork done at home. As sleep deprivation (which has been used as a form of torture, we should recognize) piled up, I struggled to keep up with daily planning and assessing. I had always thought that being a father would make me a better teacher and that being a teacher would make me a better father. Now these two roles were in direct conflict with each other.

I was running myself into the ground. I took on new roles and responsibilities at school: PTA co-president, social studies revision team member, and cooperating teacher were a few. I also took on new roles outside school. Summers were busy with master's degree coursework. Then I began some consulting work for a nonprofit organization, which was an incredible opportunity for growth and a chance to supplement my income to help support our family.

My fire for teaching was starting to sputter. More often than I care to admit, I found myself relying on past lessons and activities that were "good enough." Stacks of daily work piled up on a shelf, only to be frantically gone through in furious catch-up sessions. By the time assessed work got back to students, too much time had passed for it to be terribly valuable. My patience waned and my temper shortened, which was especially tough for my students who needed me at my best.

This was what rankled me the most. As I became more fatigued, both physically and emotionally, it was my students who paid the price. They needed me to be energized and enthusiastic, and that was becoming increasingly more difficult.

With the benefit of hindsight, I can also recognize some other factors that were contributing to my sense of burnout that I wasn't fully aware of at the time. Changes were happening in the profession that were having negative impacts on my passion for teaching. The pressures of testing were growing. I didn't really care about standardized test scores, and I resented the time they took away from real teaching and learning. Our district adopted a prescriptive math program to try to address concerns raised by these test scores. Although I was initially relieved to have my planning burden lightened, I lost my zest for teaching math as I blindly followed the program. Too often, I'd glance at the next math lesson a few minutes before teaching it instead of taking the time to adjust lessons or make them better.

Another factor that was reducing my joy of teaching was my lack of connection with colleagues. When Heather and I got married, we moved to New Hampshire and landed together in a new school. At my previous school in Connecticut, there was a sense of camaraderie and excitement about teaching that was infectious. So many of us loved what we did and were excited to share with each other. I developed many strong friendships that made going to school fun. That wasn't the case in my new school. I absolutely loved the students and families with whom I worked, but I wasn't a good fit with many of my colleagues.

It was rough.

How We Got Here

As it turns out, my experience isn't unique. There were many things going on for me at the time that were shared with the broader teaching community.

My teaching career began in the beginning of the push toward standards and the unfortunate resulting move toward standardization. Well-meaning (I'd like to believe) policymakers implemented initiatives

such as No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top. Based on the apparent belief that teachers and schools needed to be better motivated to excel, they imposed carrot-and-stick programs narrowly focused on high-stakes standardized tests. Unfortunately, because it's impossible to assess high-level learning (e.g., creative thinking, collaborative learning, leadership, self-motivation, perseverance, and complex problem solving) through bubble-in, short-answer, and formulaic writing tests, these assessments instead focused on low-level, rote skills that were easy to assess (e.g., basic reading comprehension, grammar, and computation).

Not surprisingly, this had the effect of sharpening schools' focus on low-level learning at the expense of higher-level tasks. I remember in the late '90s while teaching in Connecticut, being told by my principal (through clenched teeth against her wishes, I might add) to drop everything else we were doing in writing for six weeks to have kids practice writing five-paragraph essays. What was even worse is that we were supposed to especially focus on helping students who had scored a 6 or 7 on their previous writing test—the "bubble kids." Because an 8 was considered the score showing competence and would be emphasized in reporting in newspapers, students who were on the bubble, or almost competent, were viewed as the key to improving our school's scores. We weren't asked to focus on students who already scored an 8 or higher. Improvement in their scores wouldn't show up anyway. Students who scored a 5 or lower were too far from competent to likely score the coveted 8.

And I was lucky. I was teaching in a suburban school district that had decent enough basic test scores to shield us from the most intense and ridiculous consequences of not making "adequate yearly progress." The effects were, not surprisingly, felt most sharply in poorer communities. Some schools were shut down and taken over by government commissions. Instead of supporting local struggling schools, governments created voucher and school choice programs encouraging families to leave neighborhood schools. More and more federal and state money flowed into private schools and alternative programs, leaving less for already underfunded public ones.

Panicked by the prospect of not "achieving" on these low-level tests, school districts flocked in droves to purchase programs and curricula

designed by companies to raise test scores. If you're going to get better at something, you have to practice. So what do these programs often emphasize? You guessed it: low-level and rote work. And in an effort to accelerate learning, this low-level rote work was pushed down into lower and lower grades. Fourth and 5th grades were once the time to practice multiplication facts; now it's 3rd. Walk into a 1st grade classroom today, and it likely looks like a traditional 3rd grade classroom of 30 years ago. Desks are more likely to be in rows. If there are blocks or other building materials, they're not out and available, and good luck finding art supplies out for daily use.

In my own teaching, I felt the repercussions, even beyond the five-paragraph writing emphasis. In the prescriptive math program our district adopted, each unit was laid out in sequential order, and each lesson was spelled out in great detail—requiring all teachers to use the same process, same materials, same practice problems, and same assessments, regardless of whether these were a good match for our students' learning needs. Special education and remedial support times became more rigid, often forcing me to schedule academics at times not conducive to learning (e.g., writing at the end of the day).

You may have seen other changes brought about by an overemphasis on the testing of rote skills—changes that are often mandated and forced on teachers. Some elementary schools have adopted mini high school models where teachers departmentalize and children as young as 1st grade trade classes and teachers for various subjects. Teachers may become more skilled in teaching specific content areas, but this often happens at the expense of child-based teaching, flexible scheduling, and curricular integration. Some teachers are required to post schedules outside classroom doors so that administrators can make sure everyone is on pace and in lockstep with everyone else, again, reducing teachers' ability to flex teaching depending on the needs and flow of a particular group.

Pressures at the secondary level have increased as well. Many middle and high school teachers have shared their frustrations with me about the amount of time they spend communicating with kids and families about points and grades instead of learning. The intensity of the college admissions process seems to have worsened, and for many students,

that means it's hard to enjoy the moment as everyone is directing them to think about (and stress out about) the future.

In many places, the frequency and intensity of student disruptions have also increased. We shouldn't be surprised. This can, at least in part, be attributed to many of these changes we've seen in education. We're pushing inappropriately difficult, boring, and low-level content into younger and younger grades. Kids get less downtime. The work isn't as joyful. It's pressure packed. It's a recipe for having kids shut down or rebel.

The loss of teacher autonomy is just one of several factors that has made it harder to fully enjoy our profession. There's no doubt that the number of initiatives schools are taking on has increased in a desperate effort to increase achievement. Taking on too many initiatives leads to everyone feeling incompetent on multiple fronts at once. The past decade has been one of almost nonstop societal dysregulation in the United States, and it shouldn't be surprising that children mirror the culture in which they live. It's been especially challenging as educators, who pour their hearts and souls into their work, have become lightning rods in the culture wars with battles around masking, book bans, equity, gender inclusivity, and other social issues.

This isn't what we signed up for.

Becoming a More Well-Balanced Teacher

But it also doesn't need to drive us from the profession. When I recognized my fire was dwindling, I decided that I either needed to figure out how to better balance my life and reenergize my teaching or needed to start thinking about a new profession. There was no way I was going to spend the next 30 years becoming more and more dour, grumping about "kids these days," and counting down the days to retirement. So I embarked on a personal learning journey to figure out strategies for staying personally and professionally healthy and vibrant.

I started by asking colleagues, both ones in my school as well as ones from around the United States who I met through consulting work. *How do you stay healthy and balanced? How do you juggle family and career?*

(No one had it figured out, by the way. Everyone was just as maxed out as I was.) I read lots of articles and books about health and balance, looking for strategies and ideas that would help. I also engaged in self-reflection and tried to answer some of my burning questions. What parts of my teaching were most important, and what could I let go of? How could I (or even just *could I*) hang on to my passion for teaching while still enjoying my family?

I journaled to process my thinking and collect ideas I was learning. Before long, journal entries were the beginnings of a book that would eventually become *The Well-Balanced Teacher: How to Work Smarter and Stay Sane Inside the Classroom and Out*.

The irony wasn't lost on me that while struggling with professional burnout and exhaustion from parenting two young children, I was getting up at 4:00 a.m. to work on a book about work-life balance. Yet it fed my need for purpose and professional engagement. Everywhere I looked, teachers were struggling with the same things I was. And as I dug into the work of finding a healthier balance in my life, I stumbled on some things that really worked. I let go of some things that were weighing me down. I carved out time for exercise and found ways to eat healthy foods that fit into a busy teaching schedule. Most important, I rediscovered my teaching mojo. I rekindled my professional fire.

The Well-Balanced Teacher was released in 2010. Now, well over a decade later, the topics and themes explored in that book are more relevant and important than ever. I have also learned so much more. Teachers have shared stories about their own struggles, journeys, and strategies. New research has led to new understandings of how to maintain balance, motivation, and professional engagement.

An especially important new insight came from another project: supporting teachers with student motivation. In my book *Tackling the Motivation Crisis* (2021), I outline six key intrinsic motivators—autonomy, belonging, competence, purpose, curiosity, and fun—that students need to be self-motivated about schoolwork. As I've worked with thousands of teachers across the United States and beyond, quite a few educators have observed, "It's not just kids who need those things. We do, too!" And of course, they're spot-on. These intrinsic motivators serve as the framework for a large portion of this new book.

Our Pathway Out

We all have different challenges when it comes to personal and professional balance, but as it turns out, nearly all fall into one of four categories based on fundamental needs we all have as humans. When these needs are being met, we can be personally balanced and professionally engaged. When they're in deficit, we start to burn out. While one person might be struggling with a loss of curricular autonomy, someone else might need some support with healthy eating and hydration habits. It might be that you're hoping to gain some ideas for how to regain a sense of joy and fun in teaching while your colleague down the hall might need some support with boosting their sense of competence.

In Chapter 2, Recharge Your Battery, you'll focus on our most **basic needs**: healthy eating, hydration, sleep, safety, exercise, and rest and relaxation. You'll learn important ideas about how to shift some personal habits to increase your energy, boost your mood, and reduce your chances of getting sick.

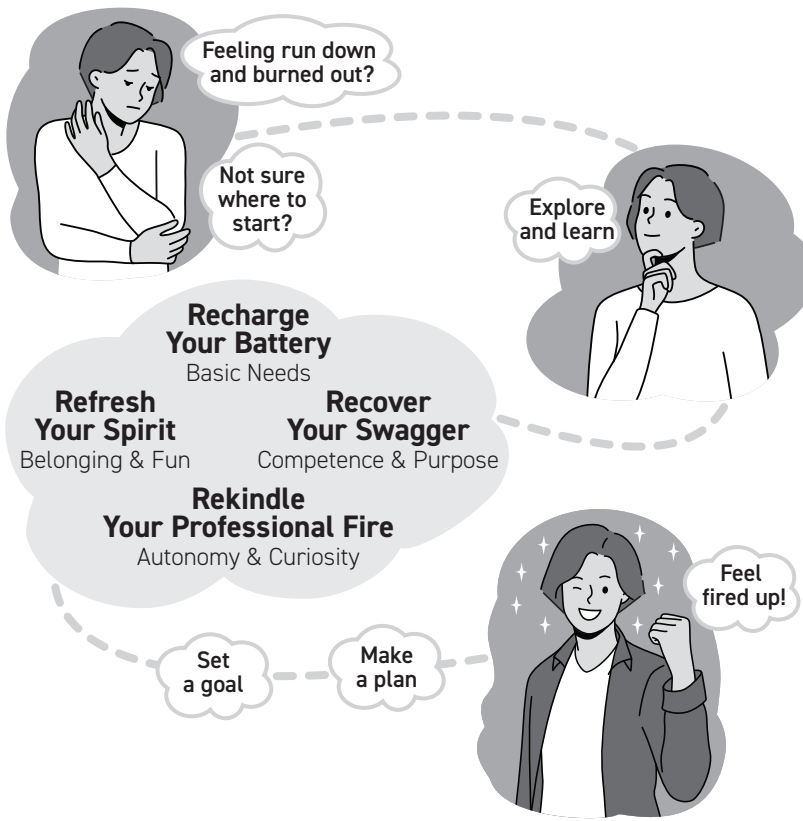
Chapter 3, Recover Your Swagger, explores two important psychological needs: **competence** and **purpose**. This chapter is about confidence. Have you been hanging your head lately and feeling like you're just not doing enough? Are you suffering from initiativitis? Are you struggling with your sense of *why* in teaching? If so, you'll likely find some ideas here that will help.

Chapter 4, Rekindle Your Professional Fire, is about passion. Is your excitement for teaching dwindling? Has your **curiosity** for professional learning and growth been fading? Could it be that you feel like your hands are tied and that you don't have much control over what or how you teach? Without **autonomy** it's almost impossible to be self-motivated. Learn (or remember) how to flex your creative muscles and regain some control—even if you're required to use overly prescriptive programs.

Chapter 5, Refresh Your Spirit, tackles two more key intrinsic motivators: **belonging** and **fun.** In the midst of all of the angst and pressure of our current education climate, we can lose sight of an important truth: teaching and learning should be joyful! What if you could head to school each morning with a spring in your step because you are eager to spend time with your students and colleagues? That's what this chapter is all about.

As you read these chapters, see if you can find one idea that really seems important and worth working on. One of the keys to effective change is to keep goals small and only work on one thing at a time. It could be easy to read this whole book, think of a bunch of areas you'd like to work on, and then get more stressed out as you're overwhelmed by the possibilities. Instead, I suggest that you jot down lots of notes as you read and then find one that feels like a good place to start.

Once you have an area you'd like to work on, check out Chapter 6, How to Build Powerful New Habits. You'll learn about a process and explore practical strategies to help you make changes that actually stick. By the end of the chapter, you'll have everything you need to get going on your journey toward recharging your battery, recovering your swagger, rekindling your professional fire, and refreshing your spirit.



Before you move on to exploring categories and making a plan, there are a few important mindsets to consider that may help you on this journey.

Mindset #1: Self-Care Isn't Selfish (It's the #1 Rule of Lifeguarding)

When I was a teenager, I took the certification course to be a lifeguard. One lesson came as a bit of a shock. We were learning how to perform open-water rescues. These are incidents where a victim is struggling in deep water, such as a lake or the ocean. If the victim is panicked, we were taught to swim to within a few body lengths of the person and try and get them to calm down. "Hi. I'm Mike, and I'm here to help. Try to calm your body down, and I'll give you a hand." If the victim doesn't calm down—here was the shocking part for me—we were told to stay a few body lengths away and wait until they were unconscious. Then we were to grab them, bring them in to shore, and perform CPR to try and save them. I couldn't believe this. We were supposed to let someone become unconscious?! Weren't we supposed to be the hero and swim in and rescue them? But our instructor explained that no matter how strong you are, if you get tangled up with someone hopped up on adrenaline, chances are that you now have two people drowning, not one. And if you're drowning, you're not able to help the person you're there to save. *In order to have a chance at helping someone else, you have to take care of yourself first.*

A barrier to good self-care goal setting can be (often subconscious) guilt. Educators are care*givers*. We spend incredible time and energy taking care of others. This is one of our superpowers, but it can also be our Kryptonite. When our sense of purpose is derived from taking care of others, self-care can feel selfish. We have our students at school and families at home who need our time and energy. How can we possibly make time to take care of ourselves with meetings to attend, assignments to assess, emails to read and write, and our own families to care for?

If this is getting in your way, here's a workaround to try: Frame self-care as part of caring for others. Your students need you to be healthy and balanced. It's almost impossible to be patient with a student who

is struggling if you are exhausted, overwhelmed, or cranky. Your family and friends benefit when you're centered and in good spirits. You need to engage in self-care to be healthy and balanced.

When viewed through the first rule of lifeguarding, self-care is no longer selfish. Others need you to take care of yourself, so it's no longer selfish to exercise or spend time on projects that give you good energy.

Mindset #2: Don't Wait to Be Rescued

No doubt, it would be fantastic if school and district leaders played an active role in supporting faculty engagement. In fact, I can't imagine why this wouldn't be one of their top priorities. I'm sure they want it to be. At the end of each of Chapters 2–5, you'll find suggestions for "taking it schoolwide." These are strategies that teachers and school leaders can work on together to support cultures of positive engagement.

School leaders need to go beyond telling teachers to "make sure to take care of yourselves" after they've just spent 45 minutes telling them about all of the new initiatives they'll be taking on. It's also important to recognize that leaders are just as overwhelmed and exhausted as teachers, sometimes even more so. If you wait for administration to come to the rescue, you might be waiting a long, long time. Additionally, teachers have such diverse strengths, questions, and struggles that I'm not sure how administration could possibly come up with a way to differentiate support for all our varying needs. You, as an individual, will likely have a better shot of figuring out what you need to rekindle your professional fire than someone else will. This is something we should all work on together.

Mindset #3: Want to Improve? That Means Something Needs to Change

Pete Hall is a former classroom teacher and principal who now supports teachers around the world with great teaching and personal and professional engagement. Pete was once giving a keynote address to a large group of teachers at a beginning-of-the-year kick-off event. His high energy was infectious, and teachers were getting fired up. He was talking

about professional engagement and learning and growing as educators. "So how many of you want to improve your practice and get better at teaching this year?" he asked. Hands flew up all over the auditorium. "Great! So how many of you want to change?" he continued. There was a startled pause by the group as people nervously chuckled and looked around uncomfortably. A few hands went up tentatively. Pete smiled and winked playfully at the group. "Y'all know that change is a prerequisite to growth."

This is such an important idea. It's easy to say we want to improve, to learn, to grow. It's harder to say we want to change. But how can we possibly grow, learn, or improve without changing anything?

Mindset #4: It's All About Habits—Getting Stuck in the Right Ruts

Have you ever hopped in the car on a Saturday morning to drive to the store and instead found yourself accidentally driving to school? You got into the car and autopilot kicked in. You're so used to driving to school that it happens automatically if you're not careful.

What are some other habits you have? What routines are so ingrained in your day that they happen automatically? Chances are that you have some healthy ones. Do you brush your teeth after breakfast? Walk the dog before dinner? Call your parents every Sunday evening? Chances are equally good that you have some unhealthy ones. Maybe you sip soda throughout the day, watch TV too late in the evening, or doomscroll news sites on your phone when you have downtime.

There's good news and bad news about habits. The bad news is that once you're in an unhealthy habit, it's hard to change. The good news is that once you're in a healthy habit, it's easy to keep it going.

I remember as a young teacher worrying about getting stuck in ruts as I got older. Now that I am older, I have come to realize that we all get stuck in ruts. The key to health and balance is to get stuck in the *right* ruts. So let's dig into this in some more depth. How do habits form, and how can focusing on routines help lead us to real change?

How Do Habits Form?

In his book *The Power of Habit,* Charles Duhigg (2013) explains how habits form. There is a three-step habit loop: cue, routine, reward. The cue is a trigger that initiates the loop. The routine is the action you take as a result of the cue. The reward is the result of the routine that results in your brain remembering to repeat this loop. This loop explains how both healthy and unhealthy habits form and solidify.

For example, one morning you happen to wake up earlier than normal. You get up and head into school 30 minutes ahead of schedule. Not only do you hit less traffic, but you get way more work done because there are fewer colleagues to talk to earlier in the morning. Your plans are more solid, you have a much better day, and you feel a glow of success. You think that it's worth repeating. So that night, you hit the hay a bit early and set your alarm 30 minutes earlier than your previous wake-up time. Once again, your day goes better with an early start. The cue was the early wake up. The routine was heading to school early. The reward was the glow of success. If you keep repeating this loop, eventually, you'll find yourself in a better morning habit.

Here's an example of a negative habit. It's midafternoon, students have left for the day, and you're exhausted. You had a particularly rough interaction with a student. A colleague pops in to ask how your day went. You share about how that one student ruined a whole lesson and how often they drive you crazy. Your colleague empathizes and to help you feel better shares a similar frustration. It feels good to let it all out and to have someone who really understands. Misery loves company, and you actually feel a real sense of belonging with your colleague. The next day, the same colleague stops by, and you immediately fall back into talking about a rough student interaction. It feels so good to vent! Before you know it, this turns into a routine. The cue is frustration. The routine is grumping about students. The reward is the sense of belonging. The problem is that complaining never gets you closer to a solution, and you're actually reliving the trauma of the rough day—bathing your brain in more stress chemicals, making success tomorrow just a little bit harder.

How Do You Focus on Changing Routines?

Duhigg (2013) explains that it's really hard to extinguish a bad habit. Cues and rewards are especially sticky. Instead, he suggests focusing on the specific part of the habit loop that's easier to change—the routine (p. 62). Let's explore how this might work with our previous example. Let's say that you've recognized the negative habit you're in. It's not really helping, and you don't want to always complain about your students. Chances are that the cue is going to stick around—you're always going to have challenging students, and you'll be tired at the end of each day. So how might you shift the routine? Try thinking ahead: What's a small success or something positive you could share at the end of the day? You can still connect and feel a sense of belonging with your colleague, but you can reinforce your sense of competence instead of cycling around negative events with students and feeling incompetent (and then guilty for speaking badly about kids).

In the final chapter of this book, you'll learn a simple three-step process for how to put all of this into action: how to shift routines and habits so that you can be successful with your new goal.

Let's Dig In. What Are Your Rocks?

Have you heard the famous analogy of the rocks, pebbles, and sand? I first heard this story years ago, told by a dear and wise colleague.

In this story, a professor of philosophy is standing before his class. He had a large empty glass jar. His class watches as he pulls a bag of rocks out from under the table. He pours the rocks into the jar until the rocks come all the way to the top.

He asks his students, "Is the jar full?"

They respond that it is, nodding with confidence. They can see the rocks filled all the way to the top of the jar.

He then pulls out a bag of pebbles and pours them into the jar. The pebbles trickle down through the rocks, filling in gaps. The professor keeps pouring until no more pebbles can fit. Students chuckle, recognizing their mistake.

He asks his students again, "Is the jar full?"

Again, they nod and say that it is. It's clear that no more pebbles will fit in the jar.

Once again, the professor reaches under the table. This time he pulls out a bag of sand. He pours the sand into the jar, and the sand seeps down between the rocks and pebbles, filling the empty spaces.

The professor then says to his class, "The jar is your life, and you must consider how you fill it. The rocks are what are most important—your family and friends, your physical and emotional health, and a fulfilling career. Everything else is pebbles and sand."

He continued, "The key to a satisfying life is to make sure to fill your jar correctly. If you begin with sand and pebbles, you won't have space for the rocks."

As you explore the next chapters, look for some rocks. By Chapter 6, be ready to tackle one, and you'll learn how to make a plan to get going.

Are you ready to begin your journey? Let's go!

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About the Author

Mike Anderson has been an educator for many years. A classroom teacher for 15 years, he has also coached swim teams, worked in preschools, and taught university graduate-level classes. In 2004, Anderson was awarded a national Milken Educator Award, and in 2005, he was a finalist for New Hampshire Teacher of the Year.

Now an independent education consultant, Anderson works with schools in rural, urban, and suburban settings across the United States and beyond. Anderson supports teachers and schools on a wide variety of topics: boosting student motivation, using effective teacher talk, embedding choice in everyday learning, blending social-emotional and academic teaching, and many more. It is his firm belief that professional learning should be engaging and joyful and should model what great classroom teaching is all about. In 2020, he was awarded the Outstanding Educational Leader Award by NHASCD for his work as a consultant.

Anderson is the author of many books about great teaching and learning including *The Research-Ready Classroom* (Heinemann, 2006), *The Well-Balanced Teacher* (ASCD, 2010), *The First Six Weeks of School,* 2nd Edition (CRS, 2015), *Tackling the Motivation Crisis* (ASCD, 2021), and the bestselling *What We Say and How We Say It Matter* (ASCD, 2019).

Anderson lives in Durham, New Hampshire, with his amazing family: Heather, Ethan, and Carly (though with Ethan and Carly in the process of fledging, this is very much in flux). When he's not working, you might

find him tending his perennial gardens, watching the Red Sox, or finding fun new places to run.

To learn more about Anderson and his work, visit his website: www .leadinggreatlearning.com. Through that site you can read his blog, subscribe to his newsletter, and learn about the many online courses he has created for teachers. You can also follow him on Twitter/X at @balancedteacher.