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Healthy Teachers, Happy Classrooms: Twelve Brain-Based Principles to Avoid Burnout, Increase Optimism, and Support Physical Well-Being

By Marcia L. Tate

Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *Healthy Teachers, Happy Classrooms: Twelve Brain-Based Principles to Avoid Burnout, Increase Optimism, and Support Physical Well-Being* by Marcia L. Tate. *Healthy Teachers, Happy Classrooms* illuminates twelve principles designed to encourage educator wellness and ultimately improve student learning.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or an entire team to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps that might be taken to promote a healthy school culture.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to create a healthy culture in your school or district.

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Chapter 1

Passion for Your Purpose

1. Define passion in your own words. How does passion affect your ability to teach and connect with students?
2. Consider Noam Lightstone’s (2021) ten signs indicating you are enjoying your work. How does your daily life measure up? What are some of the action steps you can take to continue improving your work life?
3. What are some of the physical and mental benefits of enjoying work?
4. Examine the “Action Plan for Finding Passion for Your Purpose” on page 16. How are you working toward finding your passion?

Chapter 2

Laughter

1. List six short term and long-term physical benefits of laughter.
2. When was the last time you laughed? Reflect on your time as an educator and share a particularly funny moment in the classroom.
3. Consider the action steps outlined on pages 22 through 24. What are some steps you would enjoy taking to increase the laughter in your life?
4. Name two ways you can introduce more laughter into your classroom.

Chapter 3

Optimism

1. What is optimism? Define it in your own words.
2. List the four categories of pessimism. How does allowing this type of thinking negatively affect your body and brain?
3. What are four ways you can improve positivity and optimism in your own life?
4. Consider your Circle of Influence. How can you use both optimism and high expectations to improve student achievement?

Chapter 4

Games

1. What are William Glasser's (1999) five critical needs for effective motivation?
2. List the four types of gaming and two examples of each you would be interested in pursuing.
3. On page 46, the author writes, "Removing play is dangerous as the benefits of play are significant. While their stress levels decrease with play, student motivation usually increases." What are some ways you can introduce play into your classroom?
4. Consider the reproducible on page 48, titled "Action Plan for Playing Games." What are some benefits play could have in your own classroom?

Chapter 5

Movement

1. Why is exercise and movement so beneficial for the body and brain?
2. List the four major components of exercise and give an example of each.
3. What are some ways you can add fun physical activities to your daily life?
4. Consider your classroom. Do you incorporate movement into your everyday lessons? If so, how do you feel it has been effective? If not, what are ways you would consider introducing?

Chapter 6

Music

1. How does music affect the mind and body? List four examples.
2. Why is there a correlation between music and mathematics?
3. The author writes that “when information is combined with music, there is a greater possibility of the information being encoded” (page 63). What is a memory or a piece of knowledge you have that is directly tied to music?
4. Consider the list of resources on page 66 and choose one of them to look up. How can you implement one of their practices within your classroom?

Chapter 7

Calm Surroundings

1. What is serotonin, and why is it important for brain function?
2. What are some of the physical benefits of exposure to natural light?
3. Consider Rachel and Stephen Kaplan's (1989, 1995, Berman, Jonides, & Kaplan, 2008) attention restoration theory. Define it in your own words.
4. Consider your classroom, such as the color of the walls and the kind of lighting your building uses. What are ways you can still incorporate more soothing colors, aromas, and lighting to create a more soothing environment for yourself and your students?

Chapter 8

Close Personal Relationships

1. How do strong relationships positively impact people’s physical well-being?
2. Consider Daniel Amen’s (2018) eleven relational principles. How can you apply them to your everyday relationships?
3. What does Daniel Amen’s (2018) RELATING acronym stand for?
4. Define the term “Emotional Bank Account.” What are some ways you can “deposit” more than “withdraw” in your interactions with students?

Chapter 9

Nutrition

1. Why is it important to prioritize living foods over dead foods?
2. Summarize Amen’s (2015) nine rules of brain-healthy eating.
3. Consider the list of “brain superfoods” on page 96. How many of these do you eat consistently? Are there any you would be interested in adding to your regular diet?
4. What are some ways you can encourage your students to make healthy choices for snacks and other meals?

Chapter 10

Sleep

1. What are the four stages of a sleep cycle? Describe each stage in your own words.
2. How does sleep loss negatively affect the body? Conversely, what are some of the benefits of getting ample sleep?
3. Have you ever utilized a sleep diary? If so, what did you learn? If not, utilize the action steps on page 108. What have you learned about your sleep health?
4. Consider the “Sleep Checklist for Students” on page 112. What are some ways understanding sleep health can benefit students’ classroom learning and behavior?

Chapter 11

Spirituality

1. Define the terms religion and spirituality, and describe the difference between them.
2. How can spirituality positively affect a person's mental and physical wellbeing? Provide four examples.
3. What is Everett Worthington's REACH model? List each step.
4. What are the five core competencies of social and emotional learning frameworks? How can building empathy improve students' success both in the classroom and out?

Chapter 12

Purpose

1. Define the word “purpose” in your own words. Why is it so important to feel a sense of purpose?
2. Reflect on Adam Leipzig’s (2013) five questions for helping people find their purpose (page 130). Answer them below.
3. Consider Jeremy Smith’s (2018) six ways of determining purpose. What are some steps you can take in your own life to build on these principles?
4. What is a SMART goal? What are some SMART goals you can set within your own classroom?