

POSITIVE

MINDSET HABITS

FOR TEACHERS



10 STEPS TO REDUCE STRESS,
INCREASE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND
REIGNITE YOUR PASSION FOR TEACHING

GRACE STEVENS

Companion Work Book



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This workbook is intended as a companion piece to help you work through exercises suggested in the *Positive Mindset Habits for Teachers* book.

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The author would, of course, be delighted if you referred your teacher friends to the www.happy-classrooms.com website where they will be able to download a copy for themselves 😊

Cover Design by Rocio Martin Osuna

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Recap of the Positive Mindsets

Choose It, Don't Chase It

Happiness is a state of consciousness, not a circumstance. While each of us has a predetermined genetic “set point” for happiness, only 10% of our happiness quotient is based on our life circumstances. Almost half of our happiness quotient is made up of intentional behaviors and habits that we can learn - things that we have in our control. Once we accept that happiness is a muscle that can be exercised, we can make being happier an actionable goal and can commit to working on it every day.

Make Like a Child and Be Here Now

Recognize that being happy cannot be put off for some future time when circumstances improve. We can only be happy in the present moment. A key component of happiness is the ability to be fully and actively engaged in what we are doing, also known as “flow state.” To maximize our flow state potential when teaching we should avoid multi-tasking and also ensure we are adequately prepared for every lesson. Additionally, as the ability to be creative and engage in “occupational self-direction” are critical factors in job satisfaction, we should challenge ourselves to find new and engaging ways to teach the curriculum that is familiar to us. Finally, we can learn a lot from younger students who are more apt to be engaged in the present when they are playing and having fun.

Brain Breaks for All

A powerful tool for relieving stress is taking Brain Breaks. Incorporating short, simple, Brain Break exercises into your teaching day will not only benefit you, but will help students with focus and improve their social and emotional development.

A Rampage of Gratitude

The attitude of gratitude is essential to a more positive outlook and life experience. Despite any natural inclinations, gratitude can be cultivated through habit. Incorporate practices into your daily rituals that help you focus on being grateful, and find as many opportunities as you can to share your appreciation with others.

Reclaim Your Schedule

Teaching takes an enormous amount of time, and energy and we need to be proactive in making sure that we are not overcommitted and overextended. We need to prioritize additional duties that we take on and get more comfortable with respectfully declining requests and setting boundaries on our time.



Create Space

An excess of physical clutter can be mentally draining. Additionally, holding on to things we don't need is also an unproductive mindset in general. It reinforces the idea of scarcity and lack and sets us up to fall victim to the trap of competition for resources. From drawers to walls to furniture - spend some time clearing out extra "stuff" from your classroom.

Get Connected

A key component in happiness is feeling connected to other people and connected to a cause greater than ourselves. Teaching provides us with ample opportunities to practice both of these mindsets. Anything that we can do to connect with students and adults and any opportunities we can create to practice intentional acts of kindness will not only benefit others but also boost our happiness. It's a win-win situation.

Focus on What You Want

Research demonstrates that approximately 70% of the thoughts we have are negatively focused. One of the keys to being happier and more relaxed is to train ourselves to focus on what we want, not on what we don't want. Avoiding negative people and conversations, and being more mindful of what we passively consume through media are practical ways to reinforce this habit. Practicing pattern interrupts and positive body posture can also be helpful tools in helping us "change the channel" of the drama playing in our brain.

Let Everyone off the Hook

To live a life with less stress and more joy, we need to be willing to assume the best of people, assume they have the best intentions, and they are doing the best they can with the skill set that they possess. Holding onto grievances and resentments is harmful to our wellbeing and our health. How people act towards us and towards others has more to do with their perceptions and state of consciousness than it does about us, and letting others "off the hook" is a positive mindset that can transform the quality of our interactions. As far as student behavior goes, often the students who behave the worst are the ones who need the most compassion and guidance from us, and it's our responsibility to rise to the occasion.

Keep All the Plates Spinning

While teaching can be a very rewarding and fulfilling part of our life, it shouldn't be our entire life. If we focus only on our work and neglect other areas such as our mental and physical health, our social and family relations or finances, our lives get out of balance. The result is not only stress and ill health but also a lack of effectiveness. It's hard to serve others when we are "running on empty." We can use tools such as The Wheel of Life to help discover areas that have not had sufficient attention so that we can improve our work/life balance.



EXERCISE ONE - My Favorite Teacher

Think of your favorite teacher in school. Close your eyes and imagine yourself back in class. Try and remember as many details as possible.

What did it feel like being in class?

How did other students describe them? What was their reputation on campus?

What did the teacher do that made you feel like school was fun, exciting?

Did you work harder in this teacher's class than in other classes?

What About Your Legacy?

Now think about how **you** want to be remembered as a teacher. Think about all of your students, colleagues, administrators gathering around to celebrate you at your retirement. What kind of words do you want them to use to describe you? How do you want to be remembered? What do you want your legacy to be?



EXERCISE TWO - What Does “Happy” Mean to Me?

Happiness can be hard to define. We often know when we're not happy, or sometimes we look back on times in our lives nostalgically and realize that it was a time that we were happy but didn't realize it. Sean Achor says that the ancient Greeks described happiness as, *“The joy we feel striving to reach our potential.”* I think that definition can be relevant to us as teachers. I experience joy in my classroom when students are excited about learning and I feel I am playing a part in helping them reach their potential. Personally, I think of happiness as being linked to presence, not wanting anything in the current moment to be any different than it is. Happiness is lasting, a state of consciousness, a decision we make.

There are many emotions that play into happiness such as pleasure, joy, awe, gratitude, and connection. Pleasure and excitement are fleeting. Joy is lovely, but not usually associated as much with meaning.

To help you define happiness for yourself, complete these sentences:

I feel happiest when...

I feel most connected when ...

I know I'm happy when ...



EXERCISE THREE - Experiencing Positive Emotions

Here is a list of positive emotions that are essential to “happiness.”

Next to each emotion jot down when was the last time you remember feeling this emotion. What was it in reference to? How long did the emotion last? What do you remember thinking, specifically?

JOY

When did you feel it?

How long did it last?

What was going on/what were you thinking/doing?

AWE

When did you feel it?

How long did it last?

What was going on/what were you thinking/doing?

GRATITUDE

When did you feel it?

How long did it last?



What was going on/what were you thinking/doing?

APPRECIATION

When did you feel it?

How long did it last?

What was going on/what were you thinking/doing?

SERENITY

When did you feel it?

How long did it last?

What was going on/what were you thinking/doing?

OPTIMISM

When did you feel it?

How long did it last?

What was going on/what were you thinking/doing?

TRUE CONNECTION



When did you feel it?

How long did it last?

What was going on/what were you thinking/doing?



EXERCISE FOUR – Reclaiming Your Schedule

Make a list of all of the “extra” duties that you are currently involved in that go above and beyond your contractual obligations. For each one answer the questions. This should give you a “snap shot” of your current commitments.

Type of Commitment	Stipend Y/N Amount	Scale 1-10 of your PASSION for this	Committed through the end of the year? Y/N

Take a realistic look at this snapshot. Be honest about whether the committees and activities add joy and satisfaction to your life, or leave you feeling depleted and resentful. If adjustments can be made, commit to a timeline. For future situations, you might want to practice these sentences:

“Thank you for thinking of me, but I’m unable to help you with that at this time. Good luck with the project!”

“Thanks for thinking of me, but right now my primary focus is dedicating 100% of my time and energy to my classroom and my students. They deserve nothing less.”

“Let me check my schedule and get back to you.”



EXERCISE FIVE - Media Consumption Exercise

Step One:

Make a list below of the media that you consume on a regular basis. Next to each item put a “+” if it is something that fills your spirit, has positive messages and inspires you to live your joy. Mark “-” if it doesn’t. For example, reading a spiritual book gets a “+”. Watching the evening news gets a “-”.

Television shows I watch:

Magazines I read (physical and on-line blogs that you visit regularly):



What I listen to on the radio and the books I'm reading:

E-mail lists /podcasts that I subscribe to:

Now that you have a list, tally up the "+" and "-". The results should be self-explanatory. Either you are focusing on what you want, or you aren't.

Step 2:

Now go back and put the approximate amount of time that you spend on each activity on a weekly basis. When you start worrying where you will squeeze in the time to "work on being happy" you can come back to this list and make some easy cuts.



EXERCISE SIX - Letting Everyone “Off the Hook” Exercise

Recognize that while you cannot change what has happened in the past, you CAN change how it affects you in the present. The past is gone. By holding on to past grievances, you are choosing to hold on to old pain. When you hold on to old pain, it is hard to open the door for new joy and experiences to come into your life. Again, it's like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die.

For this exercise list people you need to forgive and situations that you need to find some peace around. You may need extra paper :(For each situation answer these questions:

1. Who is the person or the situation?
2. How long ago did it happen?
3. What were the damaging effects to you of this behavior/or this situation?
4. Do you believe it was this person's express intent to cause you pain? If so, why? Are they evil or are they damaged in some way themselves?



5. List at least 5 situations where this person has behaved kindly to you, or list 5 positive attributes that this person possesses.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6. Were there any potential positive outcomes or critical learnings from this situation?

7. Whom are you hurting by not moving past these negative emotions? Can you perceive of being completely happy while harboring these negative feelings?

7. Are there things that you want to say to this person that will help you get closure on this incident (or on going behavior)? Even if you never share the information with the person, specifically listing how you feel may give you some relief.

If you have no idea where to start, you might try completing this sentence.

“I am upset with you because..... You made me feel.....”



8. Give some honest thought to how your actions/words might have contributed to this situation.

9. Imagine yourself having a positive interaction with this person. Imagine laughing with them and, if appropriate, hugging them. Change the mental image of the energy you feel in their presence.



EXERCISE SEVEN - Wheel of Life School/Life Balance Exercise

This wheel is a modification of an exercise regularly used by professional coaches. It is an effective tool to help you quickly identify areas of your life that are out of balance. It was originally developed by Paul J. Meyer, founder of Success Motivators Institute™. I have adapted it to be most relevant to your work/life balance as a teacher. This exercise only takes 10-15 minutes to complete, and it is well worth the time investment.

To be of maximum benefit, this exercise should be periodically revisited, so keep a few blank copies of the wheel. It is a good practice to check in with this tool at least once a year, or after specific times when life has caused you to have to focus exclusively in one area. We all experience life challenges at certain times that will cause us to shift our priorities temporarily. There will be times when we're in transition with life situations or careers or when we are sick or injured or need to attend to sick or aging family members. At these times we can't be in perfect balance. However, having our lives be in balance most of the time will help us deal more gracefully with challenging times. Having a "road map" will also help us get back in balance sooner once the challenging time is over. So the exercise below is not designed to be done only once. It is a tool that can be completed quickly and easily any time you want to perform a work/life balance checkup.

Here are the eight areas that we will be exploring with this wheel:

- Self-Care/Physical Health
- Self-Care/Mental Health
- Fun Factor/Lifestyle
- Social Relations - Outside of School
- Social Relations - Inside School
- Purpose
- Personal Growth
- Financial Health

Here's how to complete the wheel.

1. For each question, give a score from 1-10, with 10 being the highest. Think about each question, but also go with your instinct feeling of what number comes to mind. Remember, this is not an assignment you are going to have to share or get graded on! It is a tool to help you gain an understanding of where your work/life balance currently is, and where opportunities for improvement may be. It is not a tool for you to beat yourself up with. It is a tool to help you gain clarity, and feel empowered to know where you should focus.
2. Once you have completed all 10 questions for a domain, find the average score. Round the scores up or down accordingly.



3. Place the scores on the chart with a dot.
4. Connect the dots.
5. Observe your wheel and analyze the results. How does the wheel look? Is it balanced? Are there some obvious spots where scores are low?
6. Remember – Print out an extra copy of the blank wheel before you start so that you can keep a “master” copy for later use.

Self-Care/Physical Health

I am current with all my health check-ups, including my dentist and eye doctor.	
I am a healthy weight.	
I sleep without interruption 7-8 hours a night.	
I eat 5 servings of fruits and vegetables every day.	
I drink at least 6 glasses of water a day.	
I get regular exercise.	
I don't engage in excessive drinking or use of drugs (prescription or recreational).	
I make sure I am not sitting all day.	
I take pride in my appearance.	
I am happy with the way my body looks and feels.	
TOTAL SCORE	

What is your total score divided by 10? _____

Mark it on the chart.



Self-Care/Mental Health

I set a positive intention for my day.	
I catch myself when I am focusing on what I don't want and choose more productive thoughts.	
I surround myself with positive people.	
I am present as much as I can be during the day.	
I write down 3 things I am grateful for every day.	
I practice Brain Breaks or meditate daily.	
I am mindful of my mental diet and watch TV shows/read blogs/ listen to podcasts that fill me up, not deplete me.	
I limit my exposure to TV news and social media.	
I read something inspirational every day, even if just for a few minutes.	
I practice positive mindsets and take responsibility for my own happiness.	
TOTAL SCORE	

What is your total score divided by 10? _____

Mark it on the chart.



Fun Factor/Lifestyle

I feel I have enough free time to pursue leisure activities.	
I have varied interests and hobbies that have nothing to do with school and students (e.g., coaching sports doesn't count).	
I do at least one thing outside school every day that I enjoy.	
I attend cultural events monthly.	
I have a garden that I tend to or some other way to enjoy nature every day.	
I take time to be playful every day with my students, my children or my pets.	
I have dreams, and I take time to think about them.	
I leave town on vacation at least once a year.	
I have an outlet for my creativity.	
I read for leisure and enjoy it.	
TOTAL SCORE	

What is your total score divided by 10? _____

Mark it on the chart.



Social Relations (Family & Friends)

I engage with the family members I live with daily.	
My family gets the best of me.	
I talk to my family I don't live with weekly.	
I take responsibility for my relationship with all my family members.	
There is no-one in my family I hold a grudge against.	
My relationships with my family and friends are rewarding and stress-free.	
I meet/talk with my friends at least once a week.	
My friends are a positive influence on my life.	
My social relations leave me filled up, not depleted.	
I trust my family and friends.	
TOTAL SCORE	

What is your total score divided by 10? _____

Mark it on the chart.



Work Relations (Colleagues, Students & Parents)

My relationships with colleagues are rewarding and stress-free.	
I enjoy my colleagues and feel connected to them.	
I engage in positive conversations with colleagues, not gossiping or complaining.	
I feel I can rely on, trust and productively problem solve with my colleagues.	
I enjoy my students and feel connected to them.	
I feel my students respect me.	
I feel my colleagues and administrators respect me and recognize my contributions.	
I feel parents respect me.	
I take responsibility for my relationships at school.	
I respond, not react, to difficult situations adults and children at school.	
TOTAL SCORE	

What is your total score divided by 10? _____

Mark it on the chart.



Purpose

I feel my role as a teacher has purpose.	
I feel I have a positive impact on my students and my community.	
I believe I play an important role in making the world a better place.	
I feel connected to something greater than myself that gives me peace.	
I practice intentional acts of kindness.	
I strive to positively impact every situation I encounter or interaction I engage in.	
I view teaching more as a calling than a career.	
I take responsibility for my job satisfaction.	
I feel passionate about the work I do.	
I don't need external recognition or validation to feel good about what I do.	
TOTAL SCORE	

What is your total score divided by 10? _____

Mark it on the chart.



Personal Growth

I have work/life balance.	
I have a mentor who I trust.	
I stretch myself by mentoring someone else.	
I continue to improve my skills so that I can be a better teacher.	
I continue to learn skills that enrich my own life and that have nothing to do with teaching (for example, learn a new language or new hobby, learn to meditate).	
I have goals for my life, and I am pursuing them.	
I strive to be more present and joyful every day.	
I am proactively learning more about myself.	
I read and listen to podcasts/audiobooks for personal development, not just entertainment.	
I make personal growth and increased happiness a priority.	
TOTAL SCORE	

What is your total score divided by 10? _____

Mark it on the chart.



Financial Health

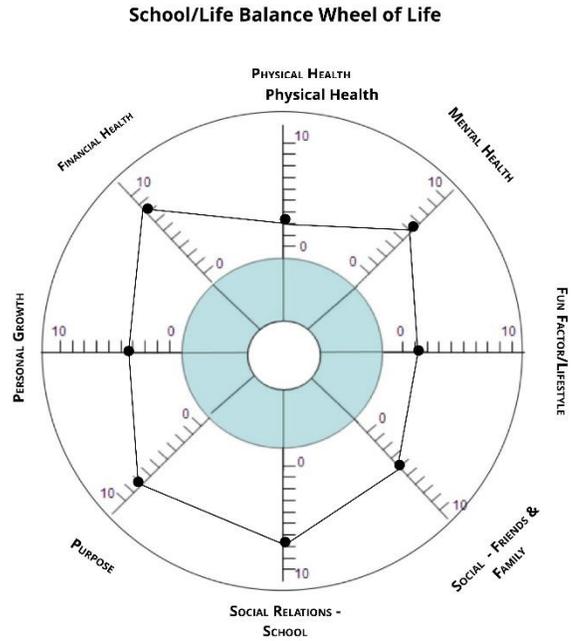
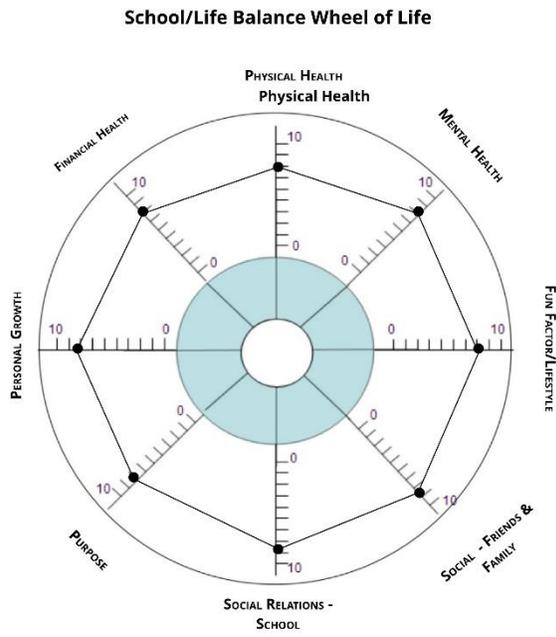
I have 3 months of expenses in cash in the event of an emergency.	
I carry Disability Insurance and Life Insurance through my school (if offered).	
I contribute to my retirement above what is automatically deducted for my state retirement plan.	
I know whom to contact when the time comes to start planning my retirement (it's never too early to plan!)	
I am educated on how years of service and supplemental educational units will affect my salary if I change school districts.	
I regularly invest in training and additional credentials that may increase my earning potential.	
I feel my school district pays a competitive wage and that I am fairly compensated compared to other teachers.	
I spend less than I make.	
I have a budget that allows for saving for things that I look forward to such as vacations and fun activities.	
I unsubscribe from paid services I don't use.	
TOTAL SCORE	

What is your total score divided by 10? _____

Mark it on the chart.

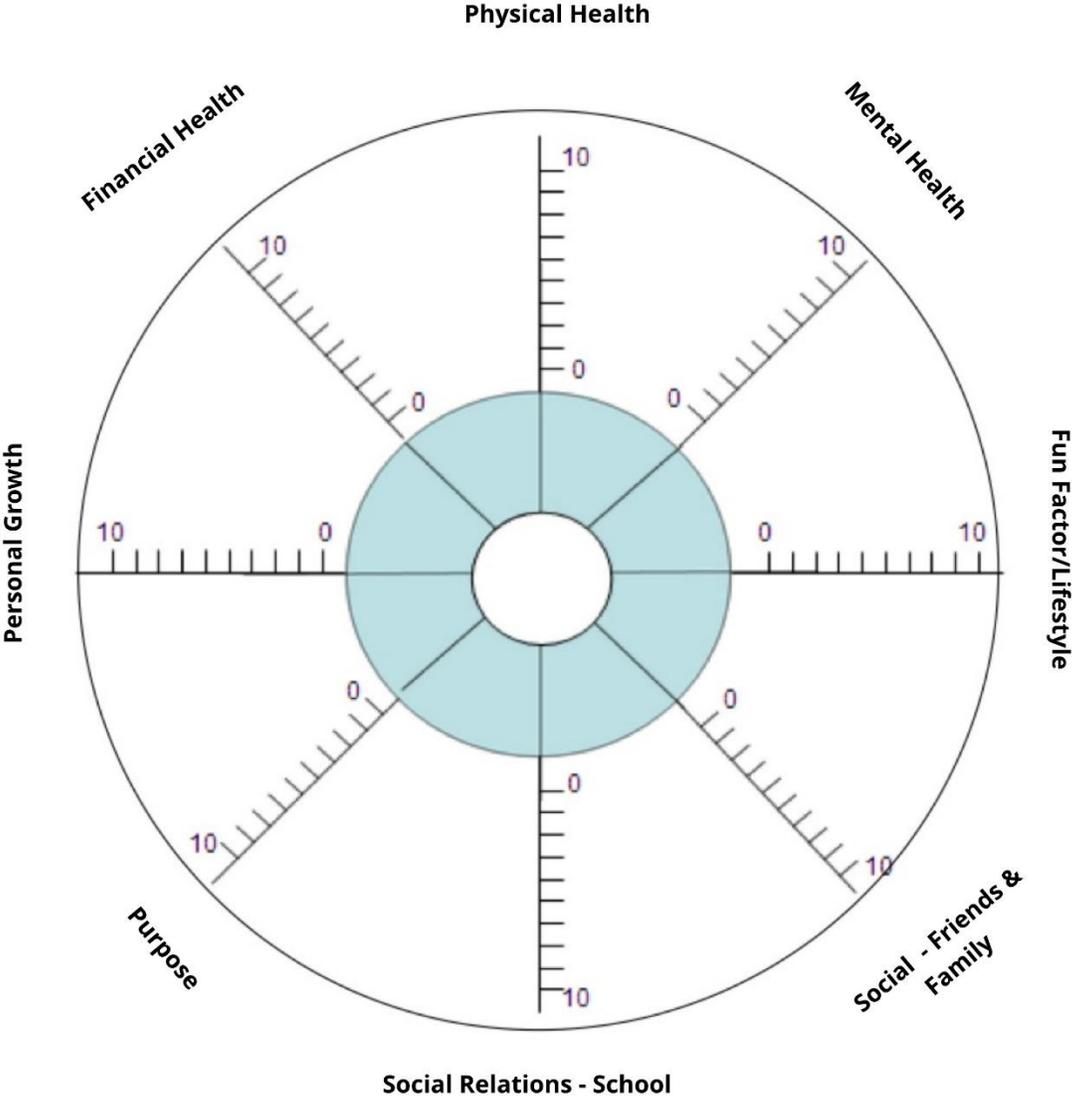


Here are two samples of completed charts. Hopefully, yours looks more like the balanced one. If not, you now have some good information on where to focus your energy.



Blank School/Life Wheel of Life Template

School/Life Balance Wheel of Life



Final Thoughts

I know that words typed on a blank screen by a stranger does not have the power to transform your life. My sharing these strategies with you is a leap of faith. I am happy when I'm in my classroom with my students, and I want you to be happy, too. Simply reading about positive mindset won't change anything for you. Deciding to do something with this information might. You owe it to yourself to try.

Wishing you all the best,

Grace

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? ...Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do...And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

Marianne Williamson

So I ask you, who are you *not* to be happy?



Bonus Materials

TICKET OUT THE DOOR

STUDENT NAME: _____ DATE: _____

ONE THING I LIKED TODAY THAT I LEARNED: _____

ONE THING I LIKED TODAY THAT HAPPENED: _____

TICKET OUT THE DOOR

NAME: _____



What I liked today:



