



Greater Good in Education
SCIENCE-BASED PRACTICES FOR KINDER, HAPPIER SCHOOLS

ENERGIZING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

"Passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what excites you."

—Oprah Winfrey

OVERVIEW

School leaders reflect on three qualities that make them good leaders—to reconnect with personal goals and values and to renew their energy and effectiveness at work.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- To encourage greater self-awareness
- To encourage empathy
- At the start of the school year

TIME REQUIRED

- ≤ 15 minutes, multiple sessions

LEVEL

- Adult

MATERIALS

- Paper
- Pencil/pen

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- School leaders will:
 - Identify three qualities that make them effective leaders
 - Write a short reflection on their positive qualities

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

CHARACTER STRENGTHS

- Kindness and Compassion
- Self-Compassion
- Humility

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Relationship Skills

MINDFULNESS COMPONENTS

- Focused Attention
- Open Awareness
- Non-Judgment

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- Before you begin, pause, take a few deep, conscious breaths, and consider the following:
- Why do you want to do this practice? Are you hoping to become a better leader, improve your relationships with school staff and/or students, cultivate a positive school climate, or something else? Why did you become a leader in the first place?

INSTRUCTIONS

- For the next five days, take time to think and then write about three positive qualities that you possess as a leader. Use the following prompts to guide you in your writing. (Choose one prompt to focus on each day.)
 - Write about three things you like about yourself—anything that makes you a good leader.
 - Write about three valuable skills that you have that make you a good leader.
 - Write about three useful traits that make you a good leader.
 - Write about three personal achievements that make you proud and contribute to good leadership.
 - Write about three things that you are good at—anything that makes you a good leader.

- Before you start writing, take a moment to picture these three things and really focus on them. In a few sentences per item, please describe each of the three things, why you like them, why they may make you a good leader, and/or any other information you feel is relevant.

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- How did this reflection make you feel?
- Have you noticed a shift in your energy levels?
- Have you noticed a change in your interactions with others?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

In one [study](#), leaders from executive MBA courses participated in one of two conditions. In the experimental condition, participants reflected on three positive qualities that made them good leaders. In the control condition, they described three neutral (neither positive nor negative) experiences. Leaders reported less energy depletion when they participated in the self-reflection intervention focused on positive qualities, which was also related to greater work engagement. Further, greater work engagement led participants to perceive greater prosocial impact and leadership influence.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

School leaders are faced with a range of difficult decisions and tasks each day, which place a high demand on their energy. Intense demands can lead to burnout or poor leadership.

Research shows that employees who are suffering from energy depletion are more prone to [violate work norms and expectations](#) and engage in more [abusive behavior](#). Thus, it's helpful to identify meaningful ways to energize leaders so that they can support the work of their staff members and contribute to a more positive school climate. This self-reflection practice can help energize and motivate leaders in a more sustainable way by reconnecting them to their [personal goals and values](#) as leaders.

SOURCE

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