

Taking Care of YOU!

or

How to Stay Alive Long Enough to Draw Retirement

Jim Burgett

Did you ever hear the saying, “If mama ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy”? Well, I think the same can be said for the school administrator. If he or she is having a bad day, a bad life, is feeling poorly or is excessively preoccupied with negative thoughts away from work, there is a good chance that others will feel the repercussions.

Contrary to what some may think, even administrators are human! Thus this chapter on wellness. We’ve got to keep our own clocks in order.

It’s odd that this chapter is near the back of the book since it may be the most important chapter of all. Yet that may also be oddly appropriate because many of us put ourselves last rather than first.

This chapter talks about what works, what doesn’t, and the life priorities we need to survive and make a difference. It talks about your lifestyle and changes that might be necessary. And that the life you save may be your own!

You might be asking yourself what makes the three of us experts on wellness? First, one of us is old, yet still employed as a superintendent. One is a marathon runner, and all three of us are in decent physical, mental, and emotional health. Personally, we like to think that we have collectively jumped through many of the hoops that we list in this chapter and that we have done enough research to know that the information is both valid and important.

We also feel qualified to write this chapter because we are all survivors. One of us survived seven bond issues and a school consolidation--enough battles to qualify for combat pay. Another survived a stay as State Superintendent in the world of cutthroat politics, and the other has survived running a very large district in an extremely challenging climate. We all did these things with success and satisfaction. We also have been long married, and all of us have families that still claim us as their fathers. We have all taught (almost) all of our children to drive, and survived their teens, and in many cases, their weddings. One of us has five grandchildren. That’s me; I even watch *Telletubbies* and *Veggetales* with them.

Yet however I try to avoid or deny it, I’m still getting older. In fact, I am so old that I have begun to enjoy accordion music. I look both ways before crossing a room, and my favorite movies are now being re-released in color. I’m so old that insurance compa-

nies have started to send me their free calendars one month at a time, and I *enjoy* watching the weather channel. I've even stopped hoping for a BMW and will happily settle for a BM.

Enough bad jokes. Although if you laughed at anything in the preceding paragraph, you exercised the right muscles, tuned-up your attitude, and probably reduced some stress. Almost any list of health tips will include "maintain a sense of humor." It never says that the jokes have to be good.

So for the rest of this chapter, I am going to lead you through five categories of health (five areas that interact with each other and with each of us) and set the stage for success or failure.

First, a disclaimer. I'm not a doctor or psychiatrist nor a social worker or a prophet. But I am a relatively healthy and happy school administrator, as are my author partners. We think we got to where we are because along the way we learned how to balance our priorities. So as you read on, think about what I'm saying from a base of common sense. If the shoe doesn't fit your foot, don't cram it on. If what I say does strike a nerve, at least think about it. I can honestly tell you that since I speak widely, and often, I've been able to share this material with many administrators. Many put some of these ideas to work; some have told me that it literally did save their life! See if any of these shoes fit you.

Learn What You Control

I credit my good physical, mental, social, spiritual, and professional health to the fact that I am a content human being and a productive superintendent. I have learned along the way that the *most important thing of all is to know and respond to the things over which we have control*. For instance, we can control what we eat, and we can control how we respond to stressful situations. We can control our aerobic and strength-building options, our daily habits, our half of most relationships, what we believe in, and our own value systems. When you think about it, we can control quite a bit of our lives!

School administrators aren't idiots. We know that we might die before the day ends and that there is no guarantee that we won't get cancer or have a heart attack or "lose our marbles." On the other hand, we also know that we can adjust the odds in our favor by believing proven research, following reasonable rules, and living responsibly.

Have you ever wondered, as a school leader who stands in front of multitudes of coworkers, community members, students, and fellow educators, what they think of you? Do they see a healthy, energetic, positive role model? Do they see someone who exemplifies self-control? Do they see a person who is well dressed, professional looking, and attractive? Do they see someone they can respect on the job and off? If so, they will more than likely follow your lead. Your wellness affects more than just you and your family; it models your beliefs and sets the stage for others. Remember: you lead, they follow.

And remember too that *you* are the last stop, the bottom line, the one who makes the key decisions that determine your own fate. Did you ever see a person have a cigarette stuffed down his throat? Or see anybody force fed that extra taco with hot

sauce and a third beer or administrators velcroed to their desks so they couldn't walk? *You* have the control, so let's talk about taking charge of that control and making a difference.

What You Control is the Key Element

For the next few pages, let me share some short, quick, easy tips to change the way you act, think, and behave. I will dip into all five human realms: physical, mental, social, spiritual, and professional. While each tip is shared individually, they are really but one important *part* of the whole. That whole is *you*. Change any of these five elements and you change them all. Drop ten pounds and I almost guarantee that you will improve all five of these areas of your life. Strengthen your faith and you will also improve your total life. And so on.... Most importantly, you control much of your own life. And you can make the right decisions.

While this is but one chapter of one book, perhaps one tip may hit home so deeply that it could keep you with us longer, happier, and much healthier. Only *you* can take control of your own life.

Physical Health

The first, and most obvious, area is your physical health. Here is a simple plan to make a difference physically.

Do a self assessment

Get an unbiased, true picture of yourself. Weigh yourself. Measure yourself. Stand naked in front of a mirror. See yourself as you are right now. Then think about what you can and can't do. Can you run around the block without getting dizzy or dropping into the neighbor's bush? Can you walk up four flights of stairs without stopping? Can you touch your toes without tumbling over? What can't you do now that you once could? When did you have your last physical?

Develop a vision

See yourself as you want others to see you. Don't plan on going from Oliver Hardy (for the old timers) or Drew Carey (for the young studs) to Tom Cruise or from Rosanne to Julia Roberts before your next paycheck. It won't happen. Just be honest and realistic. If you have bad teeth, get them fixed. If you need a new "do," then do it. If you need to update your wardrobe, go to J.C. Penney's. If you need to build muscles and strength, make a plan.

Set realistic goals

If you need to lose 40 pounds, shoot for 10. When you reach that goal, set another. To help you reach your goal of being a non-smoker, picture your lungs pink and soft instead of black and crusty. If you want to regain lost strength and to be able to

press 200 pounds again, set a goal of 75. You can always up it later. If you can't curl 25 pounds, start with five. Don't fret about where you begin, just look forward to where you want to go.

Implement your plan

Making a plan is easy. Not following it is easier still. The result is obvious: you not only remain in the same rotten shape as before, but now you also have a load of guilt to add to your excess tonnage! You can avoid all this by simply following your plan. If you find it too aggressive, modify it. Remember, *some progress is better than no progress*. That must be repeated because it is the key to improvement: *Some progress is better than no progress*. If you set a goal to walk two miles every day and at the end of the first week you have only walked a total of five, that is five miles better than the week before! Just restate your goals and stick to them. Once you see results, you will want to do more. Let me repeat that as well: *Once you see results, you will want to do more*.

Evaluate your plan

Give yourself one month of stick-to-itiveness before you evaluate. If after a month of real dedication you don't see any improvement, then either (1) kick the plan up a notch, (2) rewrite the plan from scratch, or (3) give it another month. Just don't quit!

Don't make it difficult

To lose weight, eat less and exercise more. There, I just saved you \$39.95 for that weight loss program you were thinking about buying. Or \$1,500 for the home gym you don't need. Buy \$25 worth of dumbbells and find a space on the floor in front of a TV. Exercise and watch the tube. A treadmill is also simple to use the same way. You can buy them used and cheap from someone, unlike you, who didn't follow their plan!

A Free Physical Wellness Plan!

I bet when you bought this book you didn't think you were going to get a free Physical Wellness Plan! What a bonus! And, if you use it, you might actually improve not just how you feel but how effective you are as an administrator. If, however, you are in great shape, the right weight, and don't feel you need to improve physically, just skip to the mental wellness section. (Nobody is ever 100% mentally fit, certainly no school leader!) If you are like the rest of us, in need of some fine-tuning or a complete overhaul, read on.

Has it been a while since you exercised? Do you pant after a flight of stairs? Have you added 10, 20, 50, 80 or more pounds since you were at your best fighting or modeling weight? Do you find yourself nodding off during the day? Are you a tad less friendly and more shorter-tempered than you used to be? If the answer is "yes" to any of these questions, please get a routine physical before you start an enthusiastic plan of renovation. (Of course, you should do this anyway, at least once every other year.)

Don't forget those prostate tests and gynecological exams on a regular basis too. Do you have a family history of heart disease, diabetes, lung cancer, or other serious conditions? If so, doctors suggest an annual exam. Catch 'em early and you can beat almost anything these days. Okay, stop reading and go make an appointment. Go ahead, I'll wait. And one more thing, have those moles and other skin oddities looked at too, even if they aren't bothering you. (They're bothering us.)

Let's start with the fundamentals of weight. You don't need a book for this; it really is basic. Fat and muscle add weight to your body. To lose weight you have to lose fat or muscle. You lose weight by burning calories. You gain weight by consuming more calories than you burn. The math is simple. If you use more calories than you consume, you lose weight. You are burning calories as you read this book, when you sit at the computer, when you sleep, when you watch a movie, or when you sit on a bench and look at the sunset-as long as you are not eating at the same time. You can even drink a nice cold glass of water when you do all of these things and still burn calories because water doesn't have any calories to start with. If you don't consume any food in a day and just sit around and watch TV, read the paper, and play Solitaire, you'll lose weight. Duh. But you'll pack it back on the next day when your appetite kicks in.

So here is my theory after years of deep research and endless study. I call it the Two-A-Month Plan: two pounds off every month until your goal is reached. That's 24 pounds in a year. Kick it up a notch and it is a Three-A-Month Plan. It takes very little change in your life, and once it begins to work you get into it big time. You only need one thing before you start: a steady weight level. If your weight has not fluctuated more than two to three pounds in the last three months, you have a steady weight level. If you have picked up 10 or more pounds, you will have to modify this plan. If you are already purposefully losing weight (thus the instability), this plan will help the process.

Ready? Here it is: lose 200 calories a day. That's it. You can do it lots of ways. I recommend a combination of burning calories (action) and reducing intake (less food). Why do I think this plan is so cool? It takes almost no effort to do either. If you drink one can of regular soda each day, switch to diet and you save about 150 calories. Do you eat a candy bar every day? Eat half a bar and you save 100 calories. Devour a doughnut every morning? Eat half, or cut it out alto-gether. Do you drink a big glass of orange juice? Drink eight ounces and save about 100 calories. One pat of butter is 84 calories. Order a medium-sized bag of fries instead of the jumbo one at McDonalds and you save over 300 calories--300 more if you eat a regular hamburger instead of a Big Mac.

You want to know the easiest way to cut 200 calories a day? Sit down at any meal and eat only 3/4 of what is put in front of you. If you usually pour on a healthy dose of salad dressing, pour on 3/4 as much. (Of course, if you replace regular salad dressing with no-fat dressing, or no dressing at all, you eliminate calories and fat!) If you eat pizza, put a paper towel on top of your pizza for ten seconds, and you will reduce the calories by an average of 17% just from the fat absorbed off the top! (Just don't wring the towel and drink the drippings.) Put salsa or barbecue sauce on your baked potato instead of butter or sour cream and you not only saved a humongous amount of calories, but the end product might just taste better! Isn't that easy? Eat less, but do it reasonably. Sidestep one treat a day and you will easily meet your goal. But remember

two things: you must do this every day, and your diet must remain stable.

Now the exercise part. You might want to start walking 30 minutes every night. A nice, easy half-hour walk burns about 150 calories. You can also burn 50 calories if you walk ten minutes more during the day than you are used to. You can even do this on company time and get paid for it! The next time you have a message to deliver, walk across the office, go to the next building, climb the stairs, move. If you move ten minutes more than usual each day, chalk up 50 calories burned on your road to better health. Wash a normal load of dishes rather than use the dishwasher: 94 calories burned. Ride your bike slowly and on flat land for only 15 minutes and you chop off 110 calories. Drink water and you burn no calories, but you don't add any either. Drink a large glass (16 ounces) of ice water and you will lose 15 calories as your system heats up the cold water to normal body temperature. I told you this was easy.

In summary: Drink one less beer or one less Pepsi or eat one less handful of snacks each day, do about 15 minutes of easy (no-sweat) exercise, and you will lose 10 pounds or more in the next three months (as long as everything else in your diet or activity is stable). Best yet, you will most likely keep it off since you have developed both an awareness of healthy habits and the ability to put them into action.

That's it. Want to learn lots more and find links to tons of websites about good health? Go to <http://www.nutrition.gov>. You can also get good information from the website of your favorite fast food place about what foods are best to eat and hence what to avoid.

Mental Wellness **or How to Avoid a Lobotomy**

Okay, you're tweaking your diet and kicking up your exercise. Great. Time to check your mental wellness.

If you are a typical superintendent, you can spell stress at least 30 different ways. If you experience aches or pains only when you are under stress, see a doctor. Do it now. Don't die thinking it over. Stress *does* cause physical problems; sometimes delay is fatal. But one thing is absolutely sure, *no administrator is an effective leader when he/she is dead!* Avoid this situation as fast as possible!

If your stress is occasional and doesn't cause you to turn blue, sing the Muppet Song during Board meetings, or to fall on your head, then try to control your stress yourself. Here are two starter ideas:

- * Set some time aside each day for yourself, like 15 minutes in the morning. Do things you enjoy: reading, writing, surfing the Internet, playing the piano, walking.

- * Schedule regular family time, like a weekly date with your spouse or a commitment to watch your kids' activities. (Research tells us that if you kiss your spouse hello and good-bye each day, you'll live 5 years longer. That's a trick you may want to start today! It burns calories too.)

You can reduce stress by reducing time wasters. Begin by organizing your day better, then learn to control the phone, email, and other distractions. Delegate more and

learn the magic words “please” and “thank you.” When you lead with politeness and kindness, you establish that kind of environment. It will reduce your stress dramatically. Take a nap when you need one. I’m serious. When you can’t keep your eyes open, or just need to escape the pressure, close your door, turn off the lights, and nap. If you are afraid you’ll still be zzzing hours later, set a kitchen timer for 15 minutes. If you feel guilty about this, get over it. You will be more productive, do a better job, and give the school higher quality work after a short nap. If you are worried about what your boss will think, remember--*you are the boss!*

I’ll bet you don’t take coffee breaks, get a full “duty-free lunch,” have a prep hour, or go home at 3:30. Get the picture? Take a nap or a walk if you need one. Depressurize yourself by getting away for 10 minutes. (Don’t forget to come back.) Or just call a friend, your spouse, or the operator when you need to talk to someone. Remember when you learned that all that some people need to do to get over a problem is to have someone listen to them? The same with you. So be a talker when necessary.

Here’s another idea: keep your office and your desk orderly. That helps you keep your mind in order. And don’t whine, moan, or gripe about your stressful job. Spend that energy making changes. You don’t like to hear whiners, so don’t be one. (If people start sending cheese to your office, it’s probably to complement your whine. Strive to be a cheeseless leader.)

Mental wellness is harder to address. Here are some indicators that you need to find someone professional to talk to now:

- * You experience longer than normal bouts of confusion or depression.
- * You find yourself angry for no reason (or what later seems like a minor incident).
- * You discover suddenly that lots of things really bother you.
- * You have a serious urge to do something harmful to yourself or others.
- * You think of leaving your job or home to escape your pre-sent situation.
- * You don’t care about your family or work and don’t know why.

Employee Assistance Programs help. So can ministers, priests, rabbis, or other clerics. Your medical doctor can help or direct you to the best specialist. The key word here is *help*. Get some if you think you need it. If you’re not sure, get some anyway. It’s kind of like accidentally changing your oil before 3,000 miles; it isn’t necessary but it does no damage. You are a talented, educated, proven leader. You are also a human being and you work in a tough profession. All of us are challenged to keep things in order, to balance our responsibilities, and to make life work. Getting help is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of strength.

Social Wellness, The Art of Good Relationships

Your social wellness is very important. We are told that the six most frequent problems in this area are in-laws, money, house-work, sex, stress, and parenthood. No surprise to anyone with half a brain, even less to the full-brained. So how do we come up with a quick solution for maintaining social wellness? Experts say we improve our social wellness through better communication, sharing the workload, trusting each other, getting outside help, accepting relationships, and adapting to change. Many good books exist about this topic. Why not read one and learn how to improve your relationship skills? Learn the importance of treating your spouse better than you treat the copy machine repairman. Learn that it is more important to watch your kids play ball than to go to every school meeting. Learn the need to have something to do away from work, like gardening, singing, seeing movies or plays, pumping gas (or iron), golfing, playing cards, or doing yard work for your in-laws. (Who said that all my ideas would be good ones?)

What should you consider when it comes to social wellness? First, get your priorities in line. What is most important to you? Is it the job or your spouse? Is it family or income? Is it your spiritual beliefs or your social life? Is it a beer with the guys, volleyball with the girls, cards on Friday night, watching the kids play baseball, spending Sundays with the family, never missing church, or being at school for every athletic event? It is your list, no one else's. But the choices you make do affect the social wellness you develop.

This may seem too basic, but I feel that it is indeed high-level decision making. Pledge to "date" your spouse one night a week. You may save a marriage-your own! Talk about sexual needs openly, and you may improve that relationship by one letter grade or more. Work on your half of the relationship and you will see the immediate benefits. Set your priorities so they fit with those of your family, friends, support systems, and employer and you are one step closer to solid social health and wellness. And if you are single, regularly make a date or plan an activity with friends outside of work. Include other singles too, and strive to expand your circle of new friends.

Is all of this easy? Hardly. It takes planning, trial and error, and a firm commitment.

Spiritual Wellness

You needn't tell me: tread lightly here. This is a personal zone and we are all well programmed to tiptoe around religion related to school issues.

If you don't think spiritual wellness is important, skip this section. No one will know except you (and perhaps that all-knowing spiritual being in whom you may or may not believe). Go ahead, move on if you want. It's your choice.

Some of you are still here. Good. Personally, I don't see how any administrator could feel that they have done anything important without the minute-by-minute help of some higher power. If you have a religious faith, don't be afraid to share it. Wellness comes from honest communication. Don't impose your faith on others, but never feel you need to hide or avoid it. God is not a dirty word, nor is Jesus, Buddha, Islam,

synagogue, or the Pope. Spirituality is a personal thing. It is who you are. If you are comfortable with who you are, then you are on the way to real, personal wellness.

Staying spiritually connected promotes fewer health problems, longevity, and greater satisfaction with life. It also boosts immunity levels, promotes better health habits, improves mental stability, and slows memory loss. The choice is yours. To me, spiritual health is the umbrella of success for everything else.

Let's not beat this issue to death. (A dead horse is no more effective than a dead administrator.) But I do worry about educational leaders who are dead spiritually. I know they exist, but I thankfully don't know many. If you are dead or dying in this arena, open your heart to renewed faith. It helps to have someone with you always and in all ways.

Professional Health

Often forgotten and seldom discussed is the administrator's "professional health." I define professional health simply as how you behave, look, and grow in your profession.

Don't you feel better when you are comfortable about how you look? Dress is a very important part of your professional image and health. Pay attention to style and trends. Improvements in dress and grooming are easy. Look at others whom you respect, then compare yourself to them. If it is time for an overhaul, do it. If in doubt, go to a store that has a suit or dress department with people that cater to professionals and ask for their advice.

Want a few tips in this area? Pick up a copy of any popular "style" magazine or hit the Internet. (Start with a search engine if you're clueless, like <http://www.google.com>, and type in groom-ing+male [or female], then follow the two million links!).

Did you know that your tie should extend to about one inch below the top of your belt when you are standing, not six inches above or so long that you can zip most of it into your fly? Sit in the mall and look at what people are wearing. If 90% of the women wear shoes that show their toes, maybe it is time to box up your "dress" combat boots. Are you still wearing a size 34 waist pant but the length has gone from 34 to 30? That's because you are wearing it below your tire rather than around your waist. (Hurry back and reread the part about physical wellness!) Had the same hairstyle for 15 years? How might a new one look?

We were on a family trip a few years ago and my two daughters, both teenagers then, decided that I needed a new "do." So somewhere between Illinois and Florida, they unpacked their combs, brushes, hairspray, and do stuff and went to it. Yikes! My hair was combed back rather than over, and they raved about my "new look." It took a few more days, a few more compliments from others, one haircut, and I changed the way I look. I kind of liked the old way, but I also liked the new compliments. Simple things that keep us professionally contemporary.

One more thought. Find friends whom you trust and admire. Tell them you want a professional makeover. Tell them you admire how they look professionally. Ask for their advice. They will be complimented and helpful. Make no promises that you will

implement their suggestions, and do tell them you are asking others too, to help gather opinions and suggestions. That way if you don't like something they say, they will not be offended if you show up a month later still looking like the “before” picture in a “makeover” article.

Are you professionally bored? It happens to all of us. The solution is simple, but not always easy: *change*. Change your routine. Change your job description (give yourself some different responsibilities). Change your employer (move). Or maybe all you need to do is *change your attitude*!

I could go on and on about professional wellness: ethics, morality, motivating others, knowledge of your job, leadership style, ability to manage the list is long.

You know your strengths. Build on them. You probably know your weaknesses. Improve. If you aren't sure, sit down with someone who will honestly help you evaluate your professional wellness. It's far more important than just your looks and attitude. It defines you. It's how others describe you. Are you classy, sophisticated, down-to-earth, snobbish, hard to know, conceited, special, always on top of things, dowdy, out-of-touch, boring, exciting, knowledgeable, willing to help? How do others define you? How do you want them to?

Ten Basic Rules You Already Know

Are you a list person? Someone who likes things in neat packages, boxes to check off, executive summaries? If so, then the following list of ten top ideas of healthful suggestions (in part stolen from dozens of others' lists) might just make your day. If you follow this “executive summary,” you should enjoy a more healthful, happy, less stressful life.

1. Exercise for 30 minutes a day. Don't panic and uncork the usual excuses like no time, no equipment, too tired, too weak, or claim “I'm active enough already.” This is probably the easiest of the rules to follow. Save the excuses for the other nine.

2. Don't use any type of tobacco product. Can you read? If you can, then read *carefully* the side of the package that contains the cigar, cigarettes, or chew. Tobacco kills, and it doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that it complicates and compromises your body, your systems, your mind, and your presentation to others. It makes you cough, stink, get sick, and it contributes to an earlier death. Sure, there are smokers who live to a hundred. There are also survivors who have jumped out of airplanes using parachutes that didn't open. Get the point? And, by the way, tobacco kills those around you too.

3. Don't drink alcohol (but if you do, do it in considerable and consistent moderation). My dad died from cirrhosis of the liver, as did his father. He stopped drinking the last two years of his life and only began drinking at about 40. Too late and too long. It was a miserable way to lose a good guy. How many people do you know who died too young while driving drunk--or were hit by a “driving drunk”? Is a glass of wine bad for you? Probably not. Will a couple of beers do you in? Who knows? Can alcohol do funny things to people who have high stress jobs *like you*? You bet--alcohol

can be the fuse on a stick of dynamite. So why take the chance? Why risk your health, your reputation, and your record? Ever hear of a community member, professional peer, or coworker who was criticized for *not* drinking?

4. Eat a balanced diet that includes fruits, vegetables, and whole grains each day. I know that you have heard this a thousand times and probably feel this is either a no-brainer to do or absolutely impossible. You want to know just how easy it is? Have a glass of V8, an apple, and two helpings of vegetables (even french fries count) and you meet the “daily minimum requirements.” Vary that a little and you are doing fine. Is it important? Virtually every health list gives this recommendation top billing. Almost any culture that boasts good health statistics also has a good diet. So why don't we?

5. Maintain a healthy weight. It's easier than you think. No, you don't have to be a Twiggy-look-alike to be healthy. (Please don't make us feel older by asking who Twiggy is!) A healthy weight for you might be a bit on the “hefty” side. Research is finding that individuals have a unique “prime weight.” (Good news for most of us!)

6. Spend time on relationships. Yes, I'm jumping from fruits and exercise to being lovey-dovey. A happy home life is just as important to good health as bananas and bike rides. A healthy family life reduces stress, aids digestion, minimizes some diseases, and gives you a better attitude. Remember what I said earlier; kissing your spouse twice a day adds 5 years to your life? Since reading that research, I kiss my spouse six times a day, hoping to make it to 130!

7. Be strong spiritually. The relationship between spiritual and physical wellness is proven. No religion has the edge here. Spirituality covers anyone and everyone! It promotes a sense of belonging and a trust in others. A practiced, well-developed faith adds up to a longer life. Research tells us that those who are married live longer than the unmarried, and further, those who married in a church live even longer than those who didn't.

8. Challenge your mind every day. This means reading, tackling crossword puzzles, learning another language, playing board games, engaging in topical discussions, playing cards, or creating something. It means keeping your mind challenged. Mental exercise is as important as physical exercise.

9. Be proactive. Have routine physical exams. Get flu shots. Take a multivitamin pill daily. Plan, and take, vacations. Think about your diet; plan before you eat. Schedule stress-reducing activities. Ask for help if you need it. Exercise.

10. Wear your seat belt. Yes, this makes the top-ten list most of the time because it *does* save lives. Wear it when you go to the grocery store or to another state. Before you turn the key, click your belt. Also make sure everyone in the car does the same. Even if you don't love them, it's the law.

What a simple yet effective list! If each of us developed a plan that embraced just these items, we would be in prime physical, mental, and emotional shape.

An Executive Summary, Needed or Not

Physical, mental, social, spiritual, and professional wellness are essential components of a healthy school administrator. Each component affects the others. Each fits under the category of things you control.

If you want to take control of your life, the time to start is *now*. Take a personal inventory: your strengths, your weaknesses, and your desires. Consider positive changes you want to make and forge a plan. In doing this remember the following:

- * You can control what goes into your body, so start the process today and you will feel better immediately.

- * You can control how you respond to stressful situations, so consider what causes those situations and carefully plan how you can prevent them or react to them. Become a problem solver rather than a problem victim. If things get really tough in your heart and your head, seek help immediately.

- * You can control your aerobic and strength-building pro-grams. It takes effort and planning every day, but it is as easy as getting out of your chair right now and spending the next ten min-utes walking, riding, moving, dancing, lifting this book 20 times over your head, anything, and building on that *until it is part of your life*. The results are simply amazing.

- * You can control your half of most relationships, so start today. Who needs to be called, kissed, patted on the back, apologized to, or supported? Who needs your compliment, your steady response to a situation, your guidance, your leadership? Who needs you to make a difference in his or her life--and thus one in yours?

- * You can control your beliefs and your personal value systems. Probably more than anything, this defines not only who you are, but what people think you are. This is personal, but definitive. Don't take shortcuts here. This change may be eternal.

Want to be a leader who makes a difference? Want to be someone that kids, parents, peers, friends, and family will long admire, remember, and love? If so, take care of *yourself*.

Permission granted to copy chapter twelve, *Taking Care of YOU!*,
What Every Superintendent and Principal Needs to Know.

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