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Time for A Long-Awaited Release!

.... and we are not talking about the latest summer blockbuster movie!

We are focusing on *YOU* taking time this summer to release the mental and physical impacts of your year of hard work, dedication, and navigation of the wonders of school leadership!

We know that there are times and circumstances in your school year that may place you in nonstop crisis-management mode. Summer break is your longest opportunity to reduce chronic stress, restore your energy, and reconnect with life outside your role. You can take this time to intentionally calm and nourish your body and mind to reduce the risk of burnout, overload, and emotional fatigue.

Here is a reminder of practical ways you can recover over the summer:

Create a “Recovery Window” Before Planning Next Year

Many Principals and Vice-Principals jump immediately into staffing, scheduling, and fall preparation.

Instead, consider:

- Blocking off the first weeks of vacation with minimal school communication
- Turning off your notifications for work emails
- Avoiding daily update checks
- Delaying strategic planning until mid-summer

Research on burnout in educational leaders emphasizes the combined impact of a constant cognitive load and a failure to allow recovery time.

Rebuild Your Physical Energy

Ten months of school leadership is challenging and rewarding, yet can be mentally and physically taxing.

Here are some helpful summer reset reminders and activities to consider:

- Daily walks without podcasts or work calls
- Swimming, hiking, cycling, or kayaking
- Gardening or outdoor projects
- Consistent sleep schedule recovery
- Massage, physiotherapy, or preventive health appointments

Activity doesn't have to be intense – especially in the heat! Low-intensity movement has still been shown to significantly reduce stress hormones and improve emotional regulation. Check out this *Refresh* article: [Put Aside 5-10 Minutes a Day for Qigong.](#)

Stop “Always-On Leadership”

One thing I have learned in my role is that our dedicated members can feel responsible for everyone, all the time.

Summer boundaries can include:

- Setting one designated weekly check-in time for email
- Using an autoresponder that redirects urgent issues appropriately
- Setting boundaries on additional summer requests
- Reducing exposure to contentious parent/community discussions online

Reconnect With Identity Outside Education

One of the healthiest things our educational leaders can do is spend time not being “the Principal.”

Here are some ideas:

- Travel without checking work constantly
- Join a recreational sports league
- Learn photography, cooking, music, woodworking or whatever else piques your interest and is unrelated to your professional role

- Spend uninterrupted time with family/friends
- Volunteer somewhere unrelated to your professional role

An intentional focus outside of education can help reduce the risk of burnout, and help with reconnection to autonomy and enjoyment outside of work.

Build Mental Health Habits Before September

Summer is an ideal time to establish or reset routines to help you stay well when the new year commences in late August.

Try:

- 10-minute mindfulness practice
- Therapy or coaching sessions
- Journaling difficult leadership experiences
- Reading non-education books
- Limiting doomscrolling/news overload

Avoid Turning Summer Into “Professional Development Season”

Professional learning matters, but overloaded administrators may end up replacing one form of stress with another.

Consider:

- Choosing only one meaningful professional development opportunity
- Passing up conferences that feel obligatory
- Prioritizing restoration before innovation
- Leaving space for boredom and spontaneity

Prepare for September Gradually

Late-August panic often erases summer recovery.

Consider a healthier approach:

- Create one realistic planning week for August

- Prioritize the top three operational items first
- Delegate where possible
- Accept that not every initiative must launch immediately

Keep This in Mind This Summer

Recovery is usually more valuable than optimization. Therefore, give yourself grace, and time to rest and restore. Try not to spend your summer building efficiencies for the year ahead.

Remember, a rested educational leader:

- is more resilient
- makes better decisions
- communicates more calmly
- handles conflict better
- sustains leadership longer

This is important not only for your health, but for the health of the school community you support!

Happy Release!

Sources

[Well at Work \(EdCan Network\)](#)

[PHE Canada – Administrator Wellness Tips](#)

[Ontario Principals' Council – Principal Health & Well-being Research](#)

[Canadian Healthy Schools Alliance](#)

[Greater Good Science Center – School Leader Well-Being](#)

[University of Calgary – Summer Wellness Series](#)

[Healthier Together Schools – Promote Staff Wellness](#)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Jones', is positioned at the bottom left of the page.

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If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpya.bc.ca.