

Study Guide

Practicing Presence

Simple Self-Care Strategies for Teachers



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Summary

This Readers' Guide can be used for faculty book discussion groups, PLC's, book clubs or as a self-discovery tool for inner reflection. This is a guide full of choices. For each chapter choose which question (one, none, or some) that you'd like to explore a bit further. It's an opportunity to look within, so enjoy. Most change begins with a powerful question.

Preface:

Deeply Personal Connections: Lisa writes of feeling as if something wasn't right, and after a cursory doctor's visit, she was given a prescription for anti-depressants. Have you ever been in a similar situation, and if so, what was your experience?

Personal Connections: Lisa writes of feeling overwhelmed; can you relate? What is your experience with feeling overwhelmed? Lisa wrote her own prescription of ways to turn around this feeling. What actions or "prescription" could you incorporate into your life to combat this feeling?

Educational Connections: Do you think teachers and administrators today are overwhelmed? Why? What has changed about education that makes so many feel this way? Instead of overwhelmed or underwhelmed, what could we do to just be "whelmed"? What about our students, are they overwhelmed, underwhelmed, or whelmed?

Chapter 1

Practicing Presence

Deeply Personal Connections: What are some of the drains in your life that you'd like to replace before you can add fuels? Can you identify one that you could eliminate this week?

Personal Connections: Lisa shares her belief in the importance of habits, routines, and rituals. What is your morning routine? Can you envision one change in that routine that would help you start your day with more ease?

Educational Connections: The word *presence* can be defined in a variety of ways. Lisa often says it's a compilation of mindfulness & mind-set, with a touch of motivation, GRIT, and focus. How would you define *presence*? Keep in mind, we're not looking for the *Webster's Dictionary* version; there are no right answers for any of these questions. How do you incorporate presence into the workplace? Do you encounter students that are not present? Describe how you bring them back to the present moment.

Chapter 2

Responding Rather Than Reacting

Deeply Personal Connections: On a scale of 1-10, how happy are you? Can you list three to five ways that you could increase this a point or two? How about your level of presence? On a scale of 1-10, how present are you?

Personal Connections: Mindlessness can be a common mode of being. Describe the activities that you do that you do mindlessly. When during your day are you most mindful? Where is there room for a bit more presence?

Educational Connections: Lisa lists fourteen gratitude habits. Can you add any to this list, or are there any that you would commit to adopting for a week? In what ways can you incorporate gratitude practices into the classroom or school community?

Chapter 3

Epigenetics: Ever Heard of It?

Deeply Personal Connections: Do you have any worries about the genes you've inherited? What is one thing you could do to foster stress resilience so that these genes don't "fire"?

Personal Connections: *"Your genetics load the gun. Your lifestyle pulls the trigger."* Do you believe this? What improvements could you make in your lifestyle, the choices you make, and the thoughts you think?

Educational Connections: What could you do tomorrow to live a more fully present, joyful life at work? Have you tried the heart coherence technique before a stressful event? What work situations cause you the most stress? What other stress reduction strategies have you found helpful?

Chapter 4

Simple Self-Care

Deeply Personal Connections: Take the work stress self-assessment on page 71. Share which areas you've checked often. Brainstorm some options for self-care that could help.

Personal Connections: On pages 86 and 87, Lisa provides some mini-retreat suggestions. Brainstorm your own list and select one to do within the week. Find an accountability partner to share your experience with.

Educational Connections: Review pages 84 and 85, open up your calendar and create your monthly self-care plan. Consider setting a self-care goal, communicate this goal with a colleague and agree to be accountability partners. Perhaps you'd like to exercise more, eat healthier, or add meditation to your daily routine. What routines could you incorporate into the classroom that would boost energy or bring stillness?



Chapter 5

Ever-Lasting Focus

Try some of these practices before the book discussion so that you can share your experience.

Deeply Personal Connections: Revisit the power of no. Share what you are currently doing that you secretly wish you had said no to. Is there any way you can relinquish any of these commitments?

Personal Connections: On page 115, there are a variety of meditations. Try one. Do some journaling and share your experience.

Educational Connections: Identify one area that you consistently multitask at work. Can you try single tasking in this area for a week? Describe how this impacted your productivity.



Chapter 6

Noticing the Negativity Bias

Deeply Personal Connections: Lisa shares how receiving a negative evaluation could hijack her mind and make her feel not worthy. Have you ever felt like that?

Personal Connections: “Our thoughts become our words, our words become our story, our story becomes our beliefs, and our beliefs become our actions.” Are their thoughts you could change that would change your story?

Educational Connections: Are you a perfectionist? Where in your work life do you judge yourself too harshly? If you had a name for that voice in your head that always tells you you’re not good enough, what would that name be? How can you reframe this situation?

Chapter 7

Can't We Just Get Along?

Deeply Personal Connections: Emotionally intelligent people are self-aware and tend to self-manage. Read the list of common characters in school on page 156. Does one of these characters remind you of yourself? How would you like to be described?

Personal Connections: Choose a partner and ask each other the appreciative interview questions on pages 168-169. Or complete the circle of support activity on page 160. What did you realize about your relationships? If there are relationships that are not healthy, how can you distance yourself and create some space and boundaries?

Educational Connections: Attempt not to complain or gossip for one week. Tally your daily lapses of complaining or gossiping. What did you discover about the language you use? Extend this challenge to your colleagues and students. Consider initiating a No Complaining- No Gossiping school-wide or classroom challenge.



Chapter 8

Envisioning Endless Possibilities for Education

Deeply Personal Connections: What is your vision for your future? Describe a dream you have that you don't think is possible? Now envision this as possible. What are you doing? Who is there? How do you feel?

Personal Connections: Make a list of all the things you would like to do, but believe you cannot. Question and look fearlessly and honestly at the limitations you've imposed upon yourself. Choose one area to focus on and change. Create a plan, find support, and take action.

Educational Connections: What would you like to change, create, or modify about our educational system? Use the Envisioning Process on page 180.

