

INSTRUCTIONAL
LEADERSHIP
ASSOCIATION

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

Episode #83

“Mental Health Days” For Educators



Our Essential Question

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

Should educators take “mental health days,” and if so, under what conditions?

**WE ARE
TEACHERS**



Search Topics & Categories

Search

Should Teachers Take Mental Health Days?

Mental health days are just as important as sick days.



The
**Instructional
Leadership
Show**

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER



The
**Instructional
Leadership
Show**

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

Mental Health vs. Physical Health



Mental health is as important
as physical health—doing your
job well requires both



The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

THE PRINCIPAL CENTER



Preventative Maintenance

Physical and mental health
require both “urgent care” and
“preventative maintenance”

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

Preventative Maintenance

What serves as “preventative maintenance” for your mental health?

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

Preventative Maintenance—Mental

- Rest
- Relationships
- Counseling/therapy
- Time in nature
- Non-work interests
- Mentoring
- Mental “diet”

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

Preventative Maintenance

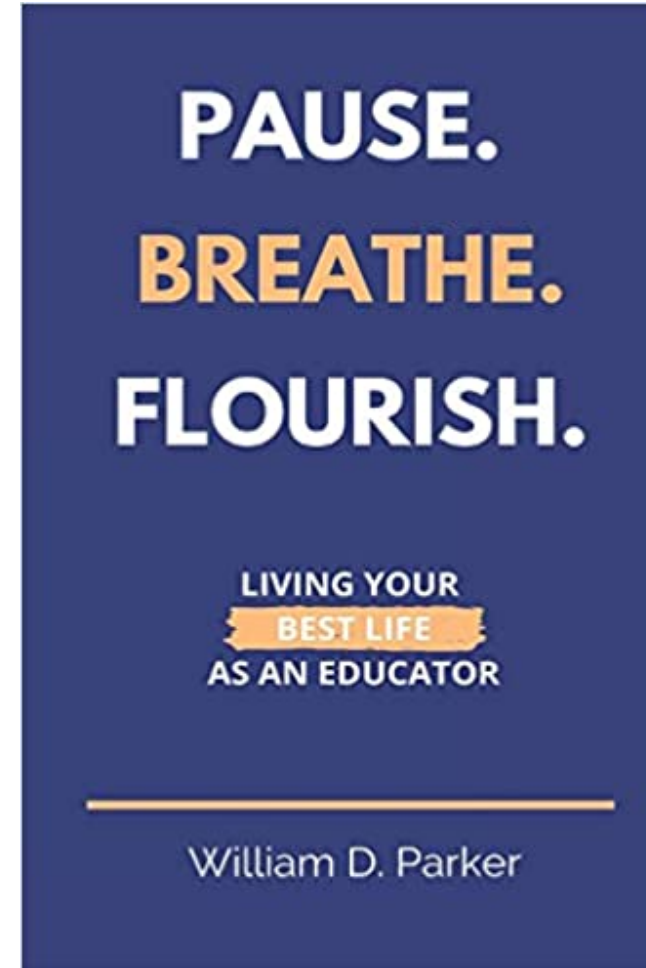
What serves as “preventative maintenance” for your physical health?

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

Preventative Maintenance—Physical

- Sleep
- Nutrition
- Exercise
- “Levels”



The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

Urgent Care for Mental Health

Sometimes we all need to talk to someone—a friend, a mentor, or a professional

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

Urgent Care for Mental Health

If you're having an acute issue such as an anxiety attack or panic attack, take a mental health day.

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

Consider Telehealth

If seeking in-person counseling, therapy, or other mental health care is difficult, consider telehealth.

Numerous options are available everywhere.

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

“Mental Health Day”

It’s perfectly fine to take a mental health day:

- For appointments you can’t make outside of school hours (e.g. health care provider)
- For “urgent care” needs
- When you are unwell to an extent that you’d take a sick day if it were physical

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

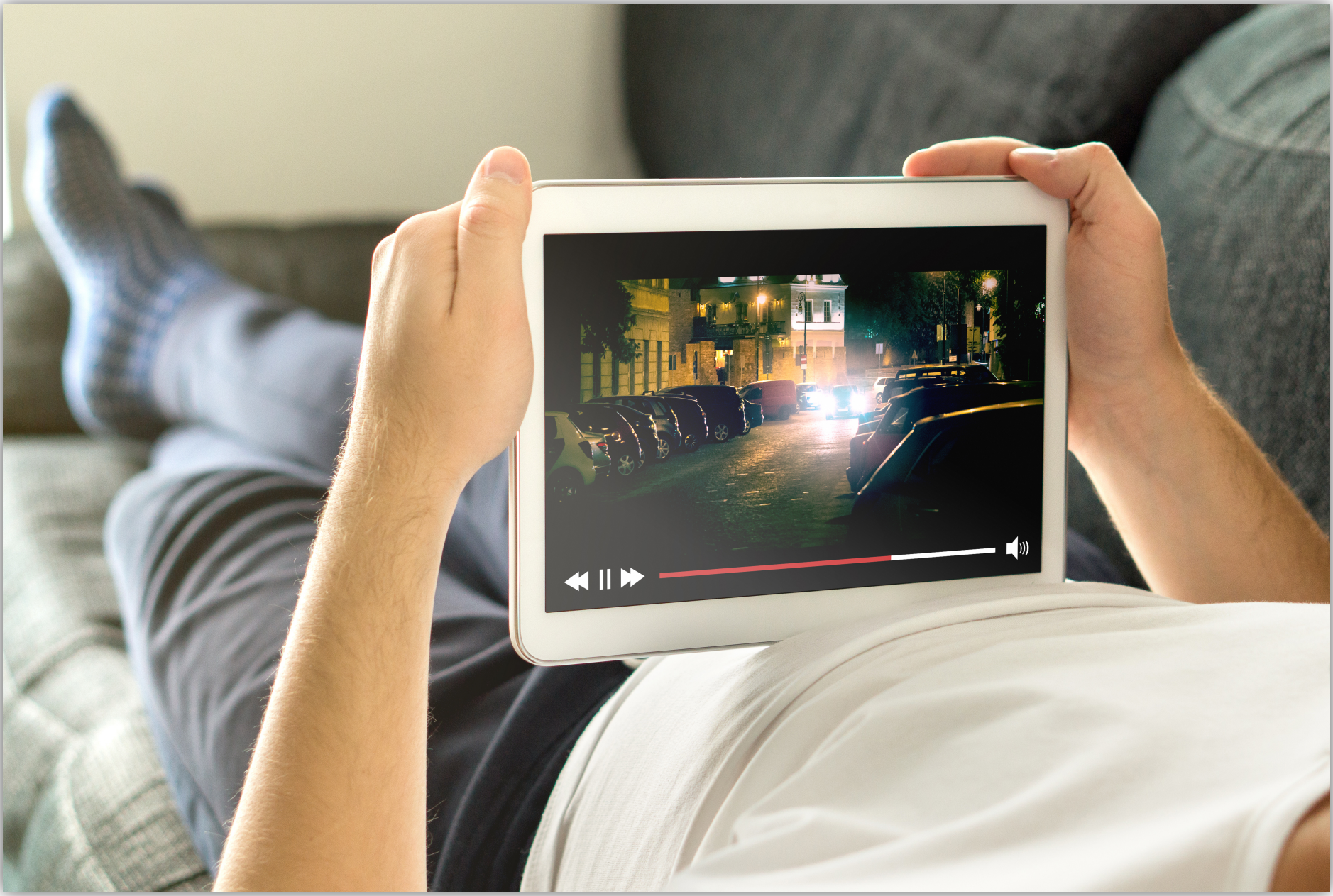
 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

Set A Threshold

- Could I make this appointment on another day?
- Can I do my job if I go in?
- Will I do harm if I go in?
- Am I willing to make a telehealth appointment?

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER



The
**Instructional
Leadership
Show**

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

Bogus Mental Health Days

- Sleeping in and watching a movie
- Extending the weekend for a fun trip
- Avoiding work or stressful situations
- Taking a spa or personal grooming day

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

The Avoidance Problem

Taking a “mental health day” to avoid work-related problems for a day is likely to only make those problems worse.

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

Facing Toxic Levels of Stress?



The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

Facing Toxic Levels of Stress?

Some educators are facing such toxic and pervasive stress that the best long-term solution is to find another job.

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

Working With Your Admin Team

- Normalize talking about wellness
- Normalize appropriate use of sick days
- Work as a team to provide coverage when someone is absent
- Be considerate

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

Personal Leave vs. Sick Leave

- Some districts offer a smaller number of “personal” leave days that can be used for any reason
- You SHOULD use these, with adequate planning and consideration for the needs of others
- Use for travel, weddings, funerals, etc.
- Treating sick leave as personal leave is a violation of your contract—in spirit if not technically

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

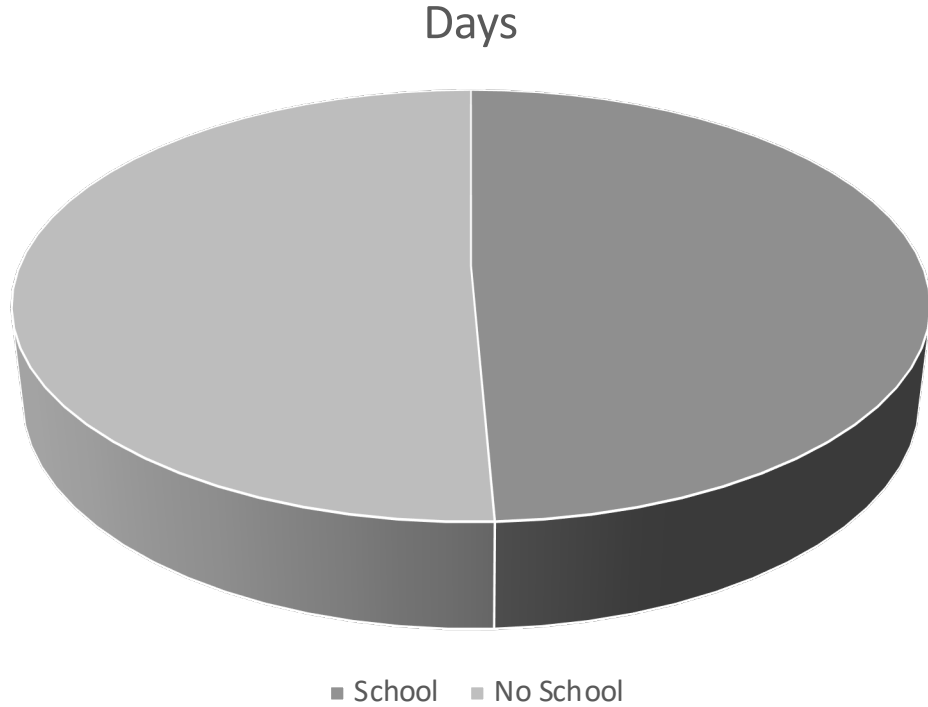
 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER



Use Your Non-School Days

Only 180 of the 365 days in a year—49%—are school days.

Do as much “preventative maintenance” on non-school days as possible.



Physical “Preventative Maintenance”

You’d never use a sick day to:

- Exercise
 - Prepare healthy meals
 - Get a full night’s rest
- ...unless something was wrong.

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

The Cost of Absence

- When we're absent, it has a real impact on other staff, who must cover for us or otherwise work around our absence
- Absences are normal—you should be able to get away without causing a crisis—but should be minimized
- For leaders, the greatest cost is the example you set
- Model staying home when you're sick, and otherwise, model showing up every day

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

If Everyone Used All Their Sick Days

If you have 30 teachers with 10 sick days each, that's:

- One absence per teacher per month
 - 1.5 teachers out per school day
 - 10 “lost” days per student per year
 - Secondary: 60-70 “lost” class periods per year
- ...not including absences for professional development.

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

My Perspective

Casually using a sick day for relaxation—and calling it a “mental health day”—is a misuse of paid leave, which trivializes mental health.

Take your mental health seriously, and take mental health days seriously.=

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

Text Me: 501-222-4415

How are you doing?

What do you think about educator
mental health days?

Text me at 501-222-4415
and let me know

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

 THE PRINCIPAL CENTER

Interview with William D. Parker

PrincipalCenter.com/radio



**PRINCIPAL
CENTER
RADIO**

**PAUSE.
BREATHE.
FLOURISH.**

LIVING YOUR
BEST LIFE
AS AN EDUCATOR

William D. Parker