

RESOURCE OF THE WEEK



Creating Balance as an Art Educator

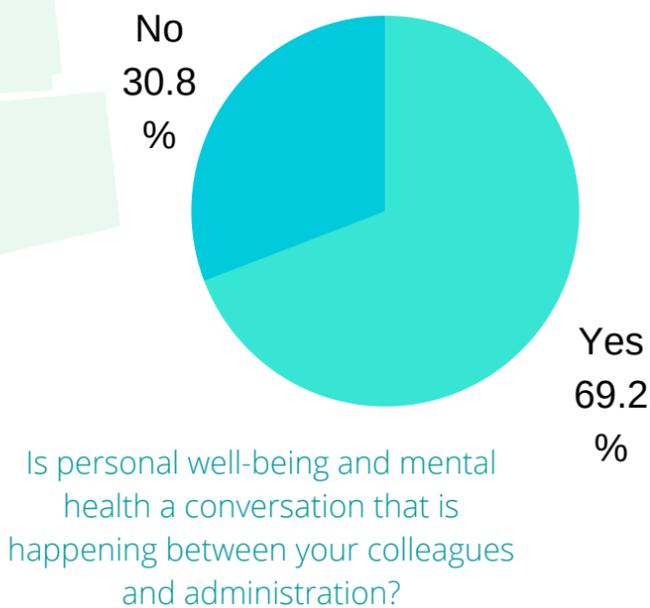
Creating balance means different things to different people, and it is more complex and layered than might first appear for this often used phrase. As we organize our own efforts individually and collectively, we need to proceed with a mindfulness of the different resources and capacities that we each hold and can handle.

We asked art educators, in the Milwaukee area, to fill out a survey and share their experiences with Creating Balance as an Art Educator during this time of school closures and social distancing. Thank you to all that took the time to complete the survey.

While we found many common perspectives amongst the responses to our survey, it is clear that what balance means for each of us is shaped by a variety of factors including but not limited to: health concerns, family needs, and personality differences, along with the level of professional support we are feeling as teachers working remotely.

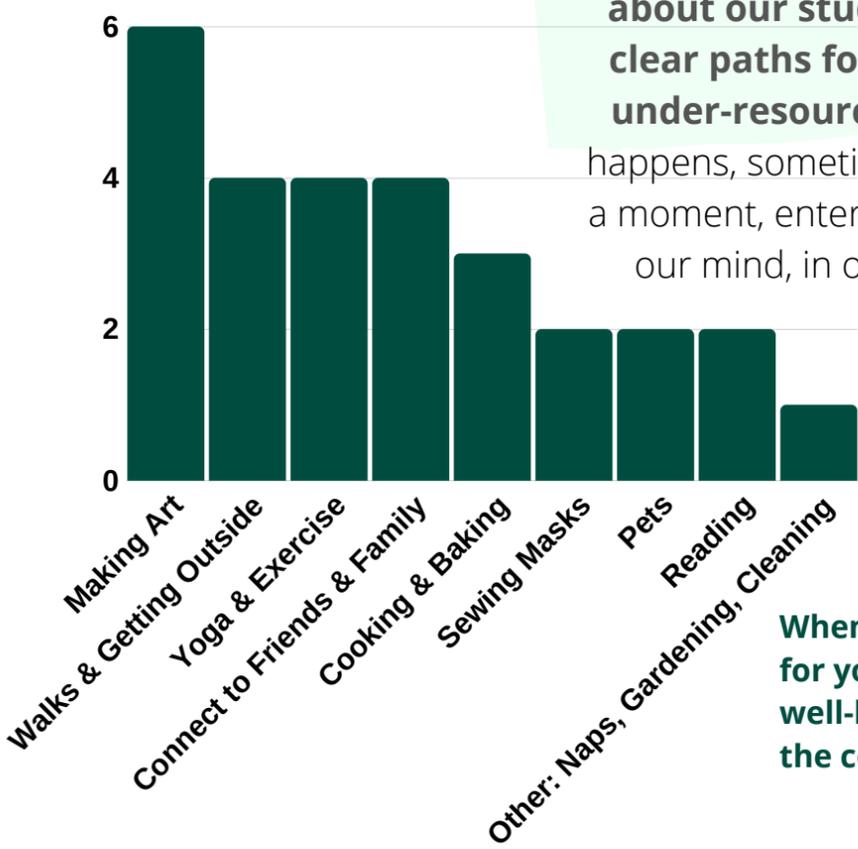
Balance is about maintaining an equilibrium

between effectively fulfilling our responsibilities to others, contributing to a greater good and making sure that our own whole selves are nurtured. These are personal and collective objectives that we work long and hard for, and we can not always do it alone--maintaining open lines of communication within ourselves and with those who help us to achieve these intentions is essential.



A sense of equilibrium can be disrupted in various ways,

including too much work with unclear boundaries, a lack of focus and purpose, excessive worries about our students and their well-being (with no clear paths for action), or competing needs in an under-resourced household. When this disruption happens, sometimes we find ourselves stepping back for a moment, entering into an activity or space that centers our mind, in order to begin again with a re-focused attention.



When asked to describe how you are caring for your personal, emotional and physical well-being during this time, here are some of the common responses.

Across the sections of the survey, teachers report the **following strategies** are being applied to address the well-being of ourselves, our students, our families and our homes.

BOUNDARIES

- As much as possible, establish a thoughtful approach to clearly defined spaces for working in your home that are separate from activities occurring during your personal time.
- Schedule daily work hours with ample time to be off the clock, and days with no work obligations (this should include guidelines for when you will check and respond to work messages).
- Maintain a space between the work that occurs between you and your students, and what you feel comfortable sharing more publicly.
- Negotiate acceptable and consistent work expectations. Have healthy conversations with others to discuss those expectations and the resources that it takes to achieve those expectations.

"Having a space like my desk/office where I only do work. Shutting my computer down after 4 PM and not checking any e-mails when I'm off the clock."

"Living with my partner who is also working online and when we live in a small apartment I feel like I can't really find another quiet space to work. Our internet has also been extremely slow and I have had many technical difficulties."

"I think that the well being of teachers needs to be taken into more consideration. **I feel like there's a huge expectation to deliver and over deliver but a lack of encouragement and resources to pour into our own cups.**"

RELATIONSHIPS & CONNECTION

Many respondents consider virtually connecting with family and friends a form of personal care, with such activities as conversation, dinner parties, and drawing groups. Relationships in our home environments deserve time for relaxation and play. **As educators, we can also encourage these same healthy activities for our students and families.**

"While this situation is very difficult, it has forced us to be very thoughtful and resourceful. It has been inspiring to see how colleagues and students have risen to and embraced the challenges. It has brought many of us closer together...I think."

SOLITUDE

Respondents identified that personal care can involve healthfully disconnecting, through activities such as napping, reading, long walks with your dog, or deactivating Facebook.

"Letting myself have some 'me' time."

"I'm enjoying time to myself."

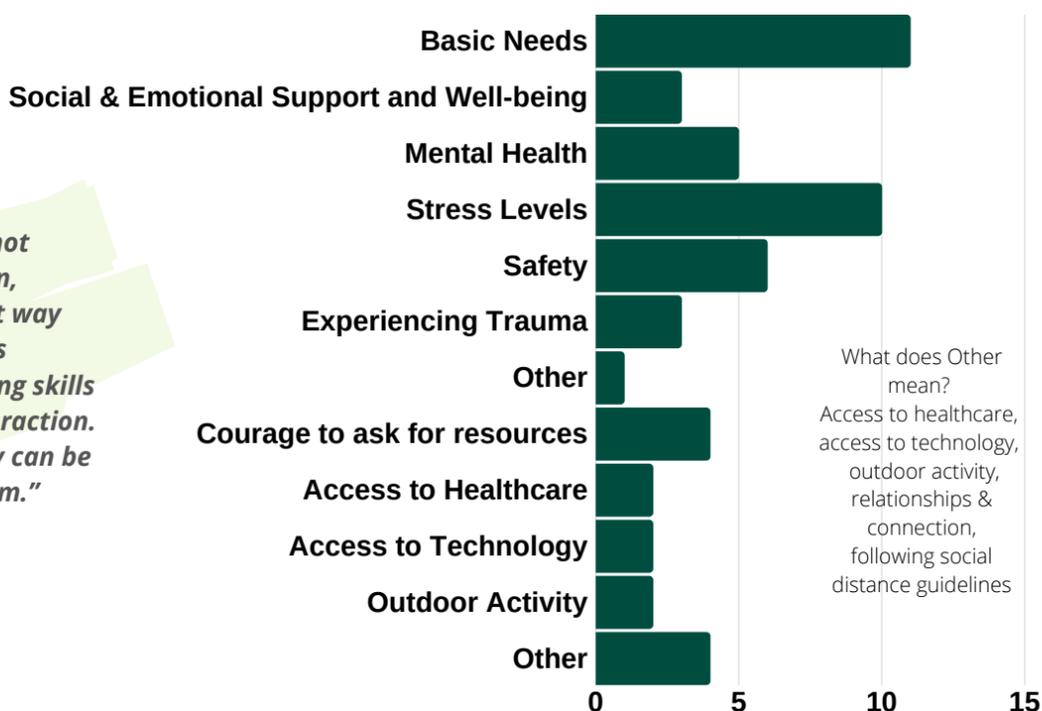
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"Take time away when needed and disconnect when possible."

IDENTIFYING OUR WORRIES

Survey respondents weighed in heavily over concerns for the safety and well-being of their students and families. Worries about basic needs being met, domestic abuse and neglect, job and housing insecurity, mental health. We were able to monitor and be a safe refuge at school. Now, there is a pervasive fear over realities which we feel little or no control. Organizing around this feels big.

Given our current reality, what concerns do you have for the well-being of your students and their families?



"Social distancing is not the same as isolation, however, it can feel that way to young individuals that have not learned coping skills that are used to social interaction. I'm concerned that anxiety can be overwhelming for them."

TAKING ACTION

Participation can be healing and stress reducing. We can work within our school communities to gain a foothold and have agency in the mutual support of others, thus alleviating the helplessness of isolated worries.

Survey respondents shared ways that school colleagues and administrators can work together to provide care. If these things are not currently happening in your own school community, start the conversation. Identify and network with those who are implementing effective plans.

- "Reminding others to take time away from work when needed and encouraging coworkers and employees to disconnect when possible."
- "Well-ness check-ins with each other. Ask and listen, "How are you doing? What do you need?"
- "Every school community should develop a coordinated plan for connecting with every staff member, student and family on a regular basis. Through these contacts, identify needs and work to meet them."
- "Identify and share information about community resources to assist in meeting basic needs (Ayuda Mutua MKE)." Erick "Ck" Ledesma joined Lynden's [HOME: Conversations on Displacement and the Arts](#) as a presenter and panelist speaker in April 2020. Please visit [Ayuda Mutua MKE](#) on Facebook for more information.
- "I would like to provide students and families with resources about staying physically active and involved in the arts."
- Sharing online resources for self-care and mental health resources.
- Encourage each other, students and families to engage in non-technology activities.
- Delivery or pick-up of materials and technology to students' homes.
- Consider non-academic virtual meet-ups for students and families, for social time, games and conversation.

[Visit Lynden Sculpture Garden Virtual Hub for more resources](#)