

Have a 5K Day!

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Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

The day to day responsibilities of running a school as well as the responsibilities at home made it increasingly difficult to find time for personal wellness or exercise and reflection. As well, it seems that the easiest things to accomplish each day seem to get lost in activities, actions, and events that consume one's sense of self and positivity. It was becoming more and more difficult to find a specific time each day to spend working on personal wellness as well as find a designated time for reflection that would allow for limited interruptions or distractions. Therefore, the purpose of my action research was to designate a specific block of time each day that served two purposes. First to focus on some sort of physical wellness or exercise and more importantly to be able to use this time to reflect on both personal and professional challenges that might arise during the day.

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered can connecting physical and emotional activities on a daily basis improve my overall wellness and effectiveness both professionally and personally?

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into my wondering, first I identified that for this project I would focus on "Having a 5K Day!". It was important to identify two areas (goals) that I would be focusing on. My first goal was to complete a 5K (3.1 miles) at least four of the five weekdays. This was my emphasis on the physical wellness and having a specific distance to reach each day. As part of this, I also challenged myself to complete a 5K race each month for the calendar year 2017. My second focus was to identify some guiding principles to put into practice each day and to reflect on their impact on my interactions each day. I identified the following: Keep it Simple, Kick it up a Notch, Keep Smiling, Key In, and Keep Moving. I would work to integrate these principles into both my personal and professional interactions.

Beginning in December, I tracked each day that I completed the 5K and the distance that I covered. Most mornings I was able to surpass my 3.1 mile goal and kept track in a journal at school and a calendar at home. As well, I registered and completed a 5K in December, January, February, March, April, and two in May. At school, I kept a journal on my desk to jot interactions that connected to the five guiding principles. I was mindful to think about how each of the principles were able to impact me each day as well as not just focusing on one but rather how they could work together to make an improvement in each day. The collection of data began in December and will continue through the end of the calendar year.

Each week - usually on Fridays - I would take a moment to do a quick data analysis. Did I complete the necessary time running? Was I able to focus on the guiding principles. This moment or two of reflection allowed me to celebrate the week's accomplishments as well as make plans for the upcoming week - what did I need to do to help meet the goals and expectations I had set forth in my project.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, two important things I learned include: 1. It is important to designate a time each day that is for personal (physical) wellness that focuses on a specific and attainable goal. 2. In order to put a more positive spin to each day, it is critical to identify a few but very specific guiding principles that can be used to guide interactions and reflections both personally and professionally.

It is important to designate a time each day for personal (physical) wellness that focuses on a specific and attainable goal. It is very easy to state I want to exercise more. For this project, it was very important to specify the frequency, duration, and distance that was going to occur. At the end of each week, it was satisfying to see the data. However, once it was compiled into monthly data, it became quite impressive. The data for the first four months of the project are as follows:

December: 51% of total days, 83% of work days ran 5K

January: 77% of total days, 100% of work days ran 5K

February: 67% of total days, 95% of work days ran 5K

March: 65% of total days, 84% of work days ran 5K

As well, I completed the following 5K races:

December: Jingle Bell 5K - 33 minutes

January: Winter Run 5K - 45 minutes

February: Be My Valentine 5K - 29 minutes

March: Great North Run 5K - 35 minutes

I am quite pleased that the work week data is all above 80% and represents meeting that goal of 3.1 miles or more accomplished in the morning runs. Designating before school times - each morning my runs began by about 5:45 a.m. - as well as the distance to be ran certainly improved my success rate. In a short amount of time, this part of the project became part of my daily routine and I was able to feel a sense of accomplishment each day by completing the requirements that I set for myself. In the first four months of this project, I ran a total of 317.5 miles.

In order to put a more positive spin to each day, it is critical to identify a few but very specific guiding principles that can be used to guide interactions and reflections both personally and professionally. For this part of the project, I collected qualitative data through journal entries made each day. I would consider the day's events and then connect one interaction that I deemed significant and then connect it to one of the five guiding principle's. Some examples from the journal would be, "courageously honest with tact at School Board Meeting (key in), awesome training with PBIS - bring on the FBA's (kick it up a notch)". I was able to integrate one or more of the guiding principle's into nearly every one of my interactions each day. Upon reflection, I also found myself making plans for how I would be able to share and model these with others in my life both in and outside the context of school.

It is important to note that although these were simple steps they made a marked difference in my daily interactions and overall school experience for the 2nd half of the 2016-2017 school year.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

Although I had a general awareness of the importance of finding time for myself each day, this project brought into focus how critical it is to designate time each day to address both physical and mental health. The time spent each day running and reflecting has a significant impact on my duties as a building administrator. First,

starting each day with a sense of accomplishment and feeling good about myself physically certainly helped to start the day on a positive note. My early morning interactions with staff, parents, and students became much more upbeat and positive. This seemed to continue throughout the day as I interacted with the many members of the school community. The guiding principles that I identified certainly were another positive influence on my daily interactions. I was more open to new experiences and opportunities. Simply keeping a smile on my face throughout the day had an impact on interactions. The building staff had a general understanding of my project and I think in very subtle ways were influenced by the change in perspective that I was trying to implement. As well, I was able to connect with some staff members regarding my goal of running a 5K. I think that my greatest "aha" was that by taking time each day for myself I was able to have a greater impact on those that I was working with.

Moving forward, I want to continue focusing on those guiding principles - especially focusing on keeping things simple as well as keying in on those critical components of each school day. I will continue to implement this project in my life. I am currently in the 7th month of the exercise routine and some of the guiding principles have become an almost unconscious part of my interactions and day! The next step will be to see how I can integrate (and share) these guiding principles with others throughout the building. As well, it will be such an accomplishment in December to see the bibs from all of the races that have been completed over the course of the year. By attending to my own needs, I have found new strengths and resources and have been able to approach my responsibilities each day with a renewed sense of purpose and positivity.

References:

N/A