

# HOW CAN TAKING CARE OF MYSELF HELP MY STAFF TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES?

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# ✧ WHAT IS SELF-CARE

## 2 Types of Self-Care

- Commercial
- Unattractive

During the Pandemic commercial Self-care became such a thing we forgot how to do the unattractive self-care, which is the most important. Commercial self-care is temporary and not sustainable. I needed to figure out how to get back to the unattractive and daily self-care for sustained health.



## \* WHY FOCUS ON SELF- CARE?

As we have emerged from the pandemic to a new “normal” we have forgotten how to truly take care of ourselves. As I watched teachers try to figure out regain the work/life balance, the burnout was real amongst everyone. I needed to start with learning and understanding how I can do that as a leader, and then share that journey with my staff.

The purpose of this learning was to better understand the difference between commercial self-care and unattractive self-care. There are benefits to both of them, but which one is more sustainable and a daily practice for life-long health.



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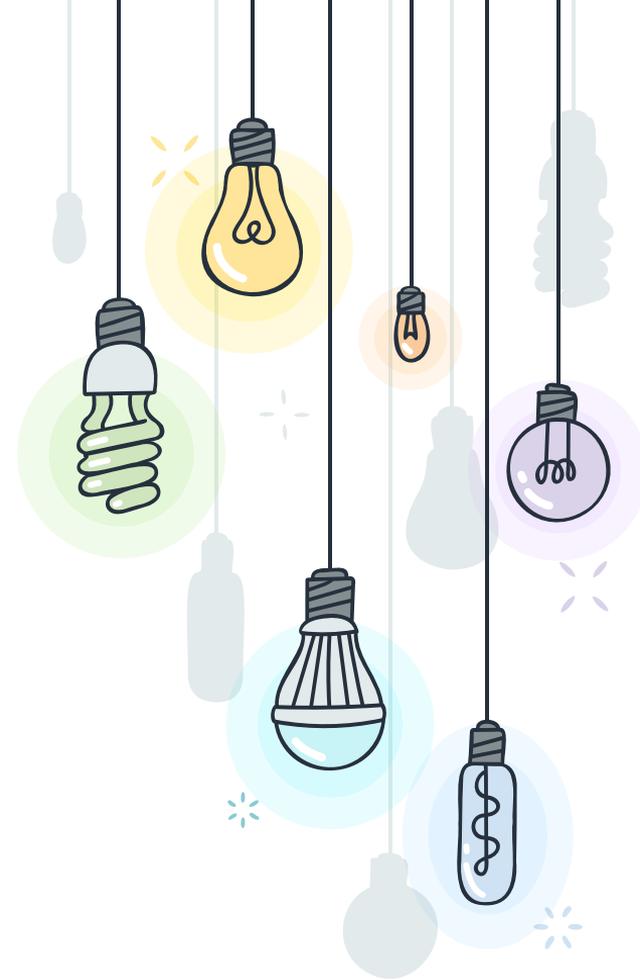
With this purpose, I wondered if I began a daily self-care journey and shared that with my staff would the following things happen:

1. I would find better ways to work through stress, be overall healthier and more clear minded
2. Staff would see a model for daily self-care, and try new things to find what works for them.
3. Create a safe-place for understanding our individual needs on a daily basis



## ✧ WHERE DID I START?

1. Read 180 day of Educator Self-Care
2. Attended Tina Boogren Self-Care Conference in November 2021
3. Researched Commercial Self-Care and Daily (unattractive) Self-Care
4. Set alarms on my phone for intentional breathing throughout the day



## \* WHERE DID I START?

1. Started sharing my own journey with staff, but not asking them to join me.
2. Added an additional daily self-care of drinking the “stupid water”
3. Added an additional daily self-care of exercise
4. Added a mental self-care of turning off work when I get home until my kids go to bed.



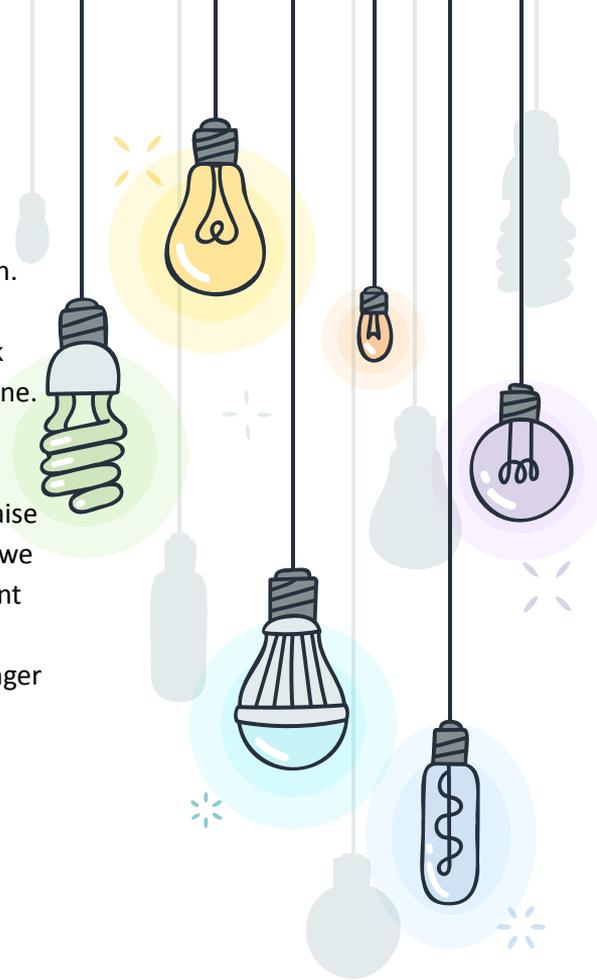
## \* WHERE DID I START?

1. Completed a January 30 day Challenge, and put it on my office door. Shared the journey.
2. Asked staff to join me with a February and March 30 day challenges



## \* DETAILS SHARED WITH STAFF

I told you that I would share with you little things that I have been doing to take care of my own mental health. Not only will I do those during ER time, but I will share some of that here in weekly emails as well. At times I might share something here and then elaborate on it more at the beginning of ER on a Wednesday. Last week during ER I shared with you about the alarms on my phone. It truly is such an important part of my daily routine. As silly as it sounds to need to remind yourself to breath, it's so much more than that. It's about taking the moment to check-in on myself. Sometimes that little alarm can change my entire attitude because I took 30 seconds to take care of myself. This week I have been focusing on again putting myself before other things. Raise your hand if you go home from school and you are just exhausted? Raising my hand with you all. By the time we make dinner, pick up or take kids to practice, get home, get kids showered and in bed that last thing that I want to do is exercise, do the dishes, do laundry, pick up the house, or whatever other thing needs to be done. So then all of those things either never get done (exercise) or they pile up until the task takes me three times longer than if I had just done it before. So with all that being said, I have started a new thing. When something pops into my head "I should go do..." Instead of spending 5 minutes talking myself out of doing it. As soon as that thing pops into my head, I say "5, 4, 3, 2, 1, go" and then get the task done. Not only does this help me stay motivated to get things done, but I am getting my body into different habits and it feels great! I will talk more about this on Wednesday, but as you thinking about things the next few days consider trying this instead of talking yourself out of it! I feel proud every time I do and accomplish a task that I did not want to do.



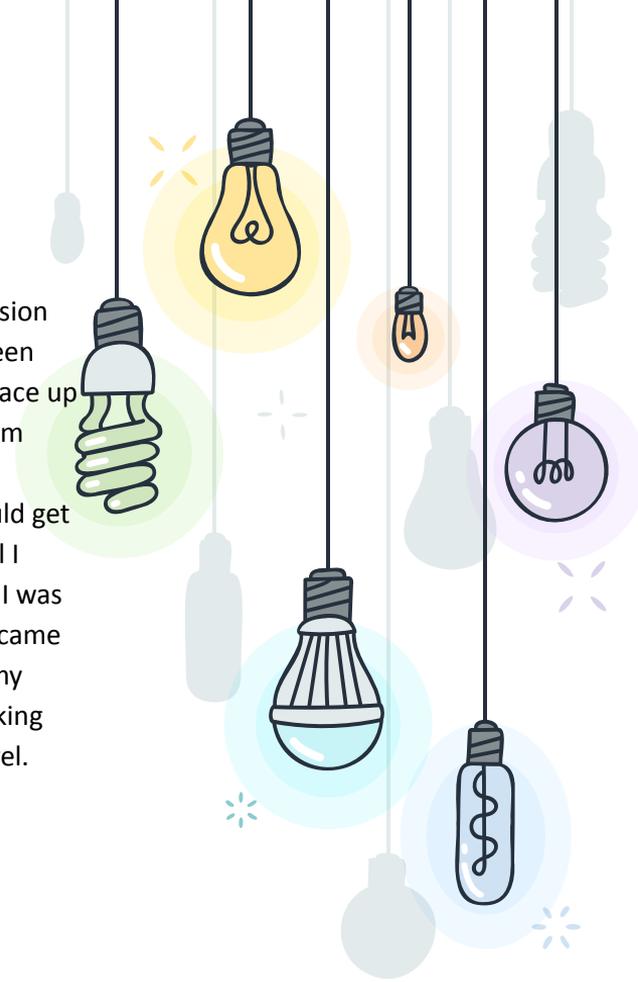
## ✨ DETAILS SHARED WITH STAFF

Have you ever heard of decision fatigue? It's a real thing, and as educators we make a lot of decisions in the moment. Educators make more than 1,500 educational decisions every single day. In a 6 hour day that's more than 4 important decisions every minute. That's just educational decisions that doesn't include any other decision you make a day. Did you know that you make 226.7 decisions a day just about food alone? When we start to experience decision fatigue we begin to reach a point where our brain is depleted and we either act impulsively or we just do nothing. So think about the end of a school day, when you go home and you have to decide what's for dinner. Raise your hand if you are with me and say "I don't want to decide what's for dinner." That's when I know that I had full on decision fatigue. I am more likely to just say order out in those moments because it's easy. It's important to start automating some things our lives. Take out some of those decisions you have to make. What are some things you can automate in your life? I started making my lunches for the week on Sunday. I put them in containers in my fridge and in the morning I just have to grab the container and bring it to school. Decision is already made, I don't have to think about it and I know it makes me feel better to have a good lunch during the day. Another thing I have been doing when I order our groceries I make a menu of what our dinners are every day of the week. We put it on a list and that is what we have because it's already decided no one has to think about it. Not to say we haven't ever done something different, but it helps 95% of the time with having to think about what is for dinner. Just these small changes have made my decision fatigue better in some of those areas. I heard someone else tell me that they work to pick out their outfits for the week on Sunday and this helps them with their decision fatigue. Try it. What is something you can automate in your life? What's something that will help with your decision fatigue?



## \* DETAILS SHARED WITH STAFF

I heard from several of you last week about how you are trying the 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 or what you do to help decision fatigue in your life. One of the things that I have loved recently is the new workout programs that I have been doing. These programs literally tell me every day what I am going to do and it takes nothing for me put to lace up my shoes and throw my hair in a ponytail. It's great. It's something different every day, which keeps me from getting bored in my exercise. I have always struggled with exercise because the repetitive nature of some workouts didn't keep me motivated. In college I loved running because I did it with my friends and we would get lost in our runs. We just enjoyed the conversation and I never realized the effort I was truly putting in, until I started running by myself and I hated it. Over the years I have exercised off and on, and during quarantine I was doing a lot of walking, but then when we went back to work I let everything be an excuse for exercise. I became tired, grumpy, and unhealthy again. This new workouts have helped with my energy level, my mood, and my overall health. I am grateful for that. What helps you with your energy level, moody and health. I'm not asking you to do anything you don't like doing, I am asking you to look at what you do to help with your stress level. What do you do to improve yourself each day? How can I help you with this?





A FEW SAMPLES OF TEACHER'S THAT TOOK THE FEBRUARY CHALLENGE FOR DAILY SELF-CARE

# \* TEACHER FEEDBACK

Good morning! I used the countdown a couple times last week to get my booty out of bed for my early workouts. One morning I had to do it a few times but I eventually rolled out of bed and jumped on the treadmill. I have found that choosing my workouts the night before helps tremendously too. Then I don't have to think about it, just hop on and begin! We also love pre-planning our menu and prepping lunches. If it's a crockpot meal I like to prep the ingredients so all I have to do is throw in in the morning. I also pick out mine and the kids' clothes on Sunday's. It gives me such a sense of relief to know that a lot of small decisions are made and our already chaotic mornings can go \*a little\* smoother.

Thank you for sharing your ideas!! I love trying these new things!

I'd love to know which exercise app you're using--I too hate doing the same thing over and over!

If you don't mind me asking, what are you doing for exercise. I stopped going to the gym after the lockdown with COVID and have been excusing away exercise for way too long. I walk and hike, but really need to get back into a routine. Sounds like what you are doing might be something that I could get into.



## ✧ ARTICLES USED TO INCREASE MY LEARNING

Surge Capacity- increased my understanding of decision fatigue.

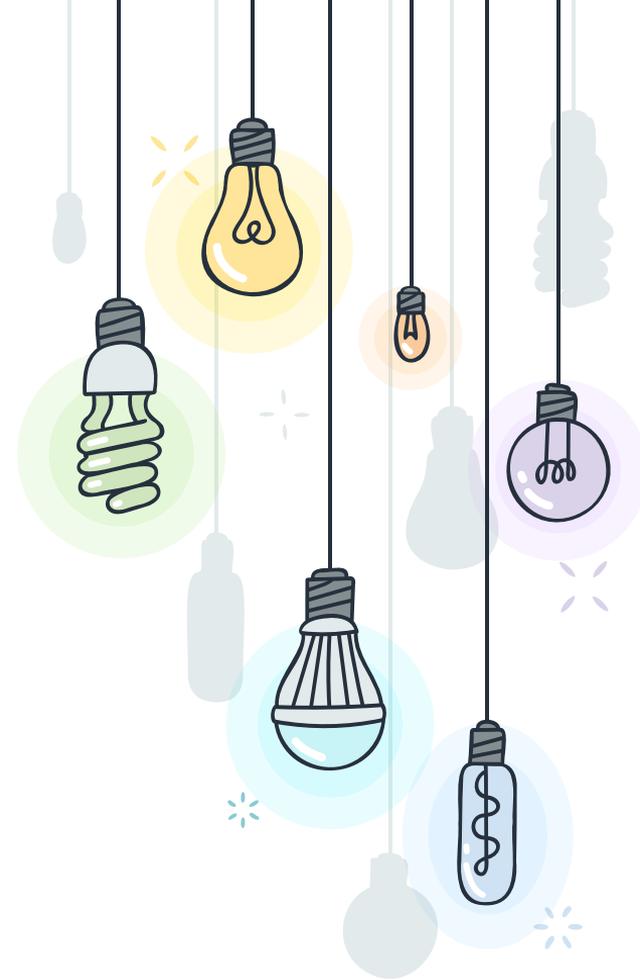
Self-Care Survey- survey helped me to understand where to start, and is taken again after implementing new strategies. (staff took this but it was personal, not something I wanted shared with me)



# \* PRESENTATIONS DONE WITH STAFF

January PLC- Wellness 101

March PLC- Safety 101



## \* MY LEARNING

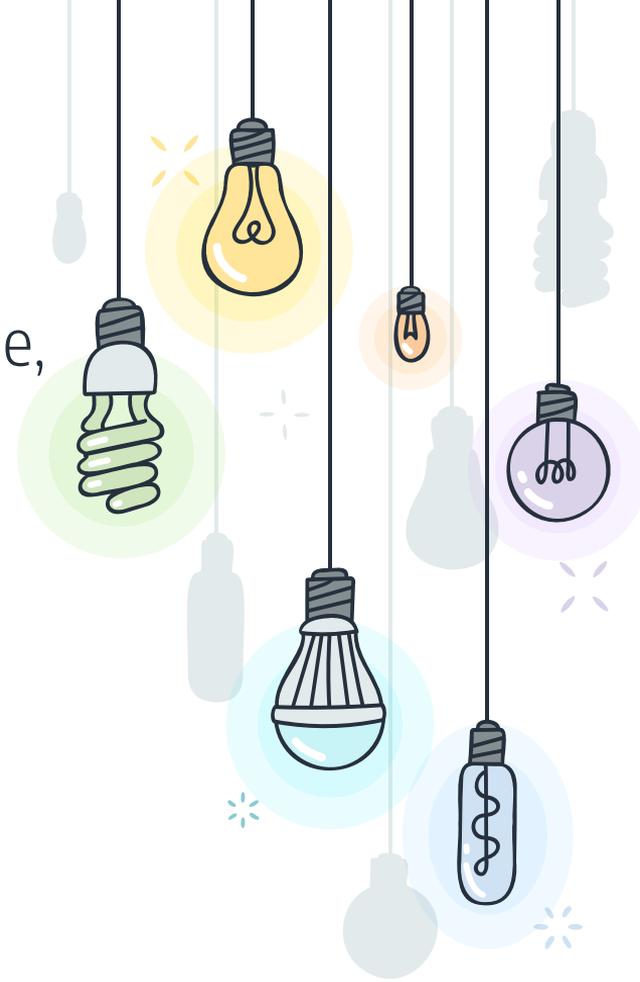
1. I can't lead others if I am not leading myself to a healthy and happy lifestyle.
2. Leading by example is a powerful tool. If I want to make an impact on others, I need to show them how to do it not just tell them.



## \* NEXT UP

Continue to develop my own self-care routine, so that I can help others along the way of understanding the work/life balance.

Develop a self-care series for new teachers

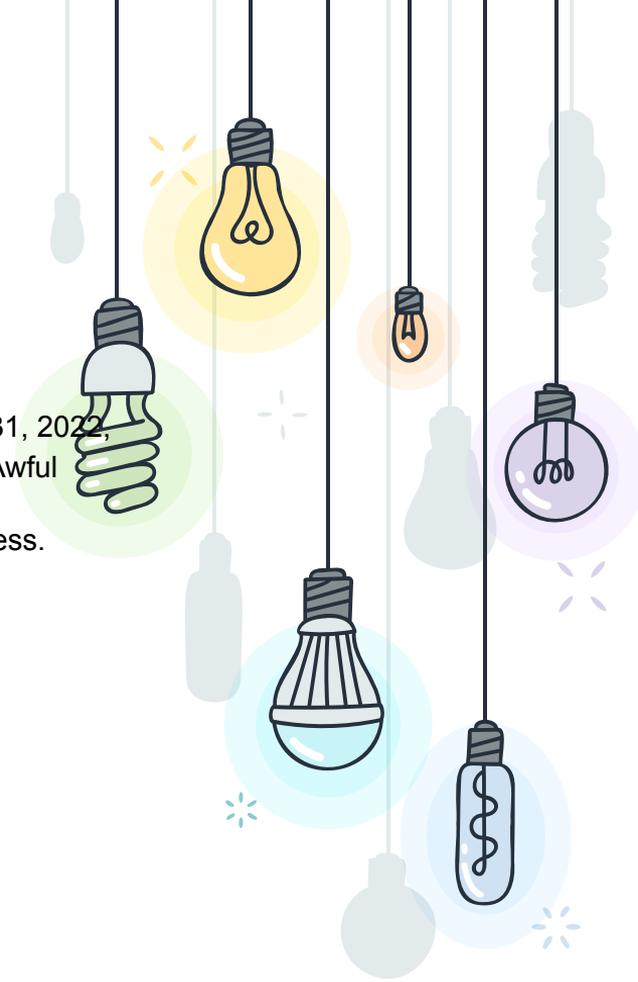


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*Your 'surge capacity' is depleted: It's why you feel awful*. The CRG. (n.d.). Retrieved March 31, 2022, from [https://thecrg.org/resources/Your\\_Surge\\_Capacity\\_is\\_Depleted\\_It\\_s\\_Why\\_You\\_Feel\\_Awful](https://thecrg.org/resources/Your_Surge_Capacity_is_Depleted_It_s_Why_You_Feel_Awful)

Boogren, T. (2018). *Take time for you: Self-care action plans for educators*. Solution Tree Press.





## How can taking care of myself help my staff take care of themselves?

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### **Background Leading to My Inquiry (Slide 2)**

During the Pandemic we all learned poor habits of taking care of ourselves. There was no escaping work, and our idea of self-care was no longer about true self-care, but about escaping reality. While that is not a problem, that type of self-care is not sustainable. Which led me to learn more about my self-care and how I need to lead by example.

### **The Purpose of My Inquiry (Slide 3)**

Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to teach myself about lasting self-care through our new normal after the pandemic. I wanted to figure out how to reestablish the work/life balance, improved mental clarity and combat burnout for myself along with my staff.

### **My Wondering (Slide 4)**

With this purpose, we wondered if I began a daily self-care journey and shared that journey with my staff along the way would the following things happen:

1. I would find better way to work through stress, be overall healthier and more clear minded
2. Staff would see a model for daily self-care, and try new things to find what works for them.
3. Create a safe-place for understanding our individual needs on a daily basis.

### **My Actions (Slide 5-7)**

As I started thinking through what my own self-care practices were I needed a better understanding of how to help my own self-care. Without knowing what I needed, I was unable to help anyone else know what they needed.

First, I researched information about Commercial self-care vs. Daily self-care to have a better understanding of what is sustainable and what is not. Through that research I also learned more about each of the topics or options that came up. For example, different exercises, massages, drinking water, etc and the benefits that each one has on your mental health.

Next, I read the book 180 days of Educator Self-Care by Tina Boogren. This helped me to try some different activities to determine which would work for me and which ones I could maintain for the long haul.

I attended a Tina Boogren self-care conference in November of 2021, which also allowed for me to learn from Tina and be able to ask very valuable questions about how I can help myself in order to help others.

I also researched a lot about decision fatigue and how the number of decisions that educators make in a day truly affect our ability to think clearly. This helped me formulate a plan of action for myself.

The first step that I took in my self-care was to set 3 alarms on my phone to check-in with myself throughout the day and intentionally stop and breathe. This allowed for me to ensure that my brain was actually getting the oxygen that it needed to make decisions.

I then added in an intentional attempt to make sure that I got enough water in during the school day. I included my secretaries in on this part, as it helped hold me accountable to refill my cup often. This has now become habit and if I don't get my water in for the day my brain and body feel it.

Next, I added in daily exercise to my routine. I joined a fitness app and started exercising daily at home.

Finally, I tackled the work/life balance by turning work off when I got home until my kids went to bed. This was a huge task for me, but I shared that with my teachers, as I wanted them to know that I may not respond quickly because I was trying to be present at home. After my kids went to bed I would check emails, but I would delay deliver those emails and schedule them to send the next morning. I did not want my teachers to feel that they had to respond just because that was when I was responding.

Along this whole process, I shared this with my staff. I wanted them to be aware of what I was doing. For the first 3-4 months I did ask them to join me, but just gave them questions to think about in their own self-care journey. However, teachers did anyway, and they have shared their progress along the way.

### **Data Collection (Slide 8-10)**

I shared my progress weekly with staff, and included through provoking questions about their own self-care.

This helped hold me accountable to stick with it. You can see samples of information sent to staff.

### **My Data (Slides 11-12)**

The data that I used was information feedback that I received from teachers. I used to feedback to know that I was on the right track with leading by example for my teachers.

I also did ask teachers to join me in a February challenge. I put that picture on slide 12. Teachers joined me on a challenge that month. I ask teachers to pick 1 self-care activity that they wanted to improve on. There were a variety of options that people chose that ranged from exercise to leaving working by a certain time. It was neat to hear how they progressed and how it helped their mental health improve.

### **My Discoveries (Slide 15)**

During this process I learned that I cannot lead others if I am not leading myself to a healthy and happy lifestyle first.

Leading by example is one of the most powerful tools that a leader can use. I cannot ask my staff to do something that I am not willing to do myself, and sometimes it requires me to jump in head first to get the process started.

### **Where I Am Heading Next (Slide 16)**

In this process I discovered that one of the easiest ways to prevent burnout in early career teachers is to teach them to maintain a work/life balance from the beginning. Obviously, there are seasons where this is harder, but when you lay the foundation it gets easier. We will be working on a self-care series for new teachers to hopefully prevent burnout.

### **Bibliography (Slide 17)**

Boogren, T. (2019). *180 Days of self-care for busy educators*. Hawker Brownlow Education.

*Your 'surge capacity' is depleted: It's why you feel awful*. The CRG. (n.d.). Retrieved March 31, 2022, from [https://thecrg.org/resources/Your\\_Surge\\_Capacity\\_is\\_Depleted\\_It\\_s\\_Why\\_You\\_Feel\\_Awful](https://thecrg.org/resources/Your_Surge_Capacity_is_Depleted_It_s_Why_You_Feel_Awful)

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