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# Definitions

Some terms in Awakened may be new to you, while other terms have different meanings to different people. Here's a brief definition of my understanding of each of the main approaches you'll find woven into this book. For sources, I've chosen online articles with easily-accessible, layperson language. Links to each source and other recommended resources can be found at [TruthforTeachers.com/awakened](http://TruthforTeachers.com/awakened).

## **Mind-Body Connection:**

The belief that the causes, development and outcomes of a physical illness are determined from the interaction of psychological, social, and biological factors. It's important to note that "mind" is not synonymous with brain. Instead, in our definition, the mind consists of mental states such as thoughts, emotions, beliefs, attitudes, and images. The brain is the hardware that allows us to experience these mental states. (*Source: Taking Charge by the University of Minnesota*)

## **Mindfulness:**

The basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us. Mindfulness is a quality that every human being already possesses. It's not something you have to conjure up, you just have to learn how to access it. While mindfulness is innate, it can be cultivated through proven techniques. (*Source: Mindful.org*)

## **Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT):**

An empirically based psychological intervention that uses acceptance and mindfulness along with commitment and behavior-change strategies to increase psychological flexibility. The objective of ACT is not elimination of difficult feelings; rather, it is to be present with what life brings and to "move toward valued behavior." ACT invites people

to open up to unpleasant feelings, learn not to overreact to them, and not avoid situations where they are invoked. Its therapeutic effect aims to be a positive spiral where a greater understanding of one's emotions leads to a better understanding of the truth. In ACT, truth is measured through the concept of workability, or what works to take another step toward what matters, e.g., values, meaning. *(Source: Psychology Today)*

### **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)**

A type of psychotherapeutic treatment that helps people learn how to identify and change the destructive or disturbing thought patterns that have a negative influence on their behavior and emotions. Through CBT, faulty thoughts are identified, challenged, and replaced with more objective, realistic thoughts. *(Source: Verywellmind.com)*

### **Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)**

A newer type of CBT that addresses destructive or disturbing thoughts and behaviors while incorporating treatment strategies of emotional regulation and mindfulness. The term "dialectical" comes from the idea that bringing together two opposites in therapy -- acceptance and change -- brings better results than either one alone. *(Source: WebMD)*

This book draws upon my lived experiences and curation of the most helpful approaches of each practice above through a trauma-informed lens for educators. I'll offer a wide variety of tools so you can decide when and how to use each approach.

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**Honoring your body, feelings,  
and moods**

A person's mood (current sentiment or disposition) can change frequently from moment to moment. And for many years, I based most of my actions on exactly that—the way I felt in any given moment:

- If I was in the mood to be friendly to my co-workers, I would; if I felt tired and grouchy, I'd keep my head down and duck into my classroom without speaking.
- If I felt patient with the kids, I'd take extra time to help them understand directions and settle into an assignment; if I wasn't in the mood, I'd give directions one time and insist those who weren't listening figure it out on their own.

- If I felt invigorated and accomplished after school, I'd do something productive like clean out a cabinet; if my mood was low-energy and discouraged, I'd sit at my desk and procrastinate on the internet.

My behavior in each of these examples wasn't a conscious choice. Allowing myself time to go on social media or being extra strict about not repeating directions to students would have been fine if I chose those actions intentionally.

But I wasn't doing them because they were the right choice, or even what I sincerely wanted to do. I did them because I was following my moods.

In retrospect, it's easy to see how my moods often stemmed from my thoughts and mental habits.

Negative thoughts about the things coworkers are doing "wrong" will create emotions of resentment, pride, and anger which prevent us from *feeling like* being collaborative and helpful.

Negative thoughts about our most difficult students create exasperation and hopelessness which make us *feel like* giving up on them.

Because so many thoughts cross through our minds during the course of a day, our moods can change from elated to despondent, from disappointed to excited, and from blasé to furious.

Often these changes occur without warning and even without reason. As a result, it can feel like we're stuck on an emotional roller coaster and unable to stop the ride.

### **3 reasons not to depend on your moods**

In carefully observing and monitoring my feelings over time, I've come to understand a few basic characteristics of moods that have made me cautious about giving into them:

### **1) Moods often lead us to do what's easiest, rather than what's best.**

Your conscious mind will tell you the best decision is to get up early, go to the gym before work, and get all your papers graded after school. However, when you wake up, you'll probably be in the mood to sleep in, eat a few doughnuts, and then return to your couch immediately after school to binge watch a TV show.

Your moods are a base instinct. They will often tell you to do whatever feels good in the moment, regardless of the consequences later on.

### **2) Moods are often illogical.**

Have you ever woken up in a bad mood for absolutely no reason at all? When you went to sleep everything was fine, but in the morning...watch out, world!

Maybe you've felt depressed for no reason; your circumstances are the same as the day before, and yet today, everything feels hopeless and impossible. And you've probably noticed that certain things will make you absolutely furious on occasion, whereas at other times they don't bother you at all.

This could be due to hormonal shifts, physical ailments, or any number of factors that have nothing to do with how you *want* to feel.

Moods don't follow logic. One of the most dangerous things you can do is try to reason based on how you feel: *I feel like an idiot, so I must be one. I feel like this task is insurmountable, so it must be too hard. I feel like things are getting worse, so therefore it's true they'll never get better.*

### **3) Moods are extremely contagious.**

The stronger a person's personality and energy, the more likely it is that their mood will rub off on you. Empaths and highly sensitive people

in particular need to be mindful not to confuse other people's feelings with their own.

You can start your day in a pretty good mood, but after just a minute or two in the presence of an extremely angry person, your mood might be thrown off-kilter for the rest of the day. Sometimes crossing paths with a rude or inconsiderate driver on the way to work can shift your mood toward the negative.

Similarly, if you live with someone whose moods are often low or shifting unpredictably, that can impact your mood state and cause you to feel and behave in ways that aren't really true to yourself.

## **Distinguishing between your moods and intuition**

Not being able to trust your moods is different from not being able to trust yourself or your intuition.

For me, the difference between a mood and my intuition is that my intuition tells me what's actually best for me and what I really need. It's the wisest part of myself, and manifests as a deep knowing or a still, small voice.

I might *feel like* staying up late and watching just one more episode of my favorite show—that's a passing mood. But my gut instinct, that knowing deep inside, is saying, "Go to bed now; you'll feel so much better in the morning if you do."

**My intuition is quiet, and I can feel in my body when I'm doing the right thing. I feel lighter, relieved, more energetic. My intuition often tells me to do things I don't *feel like* doing, but that I truly *want* to do.**

For example, I may not have *felt like* taking on more caregiving responsibilities when my grandmother broke her hip, but I *wanted* to



do it. My intuition told me: *This is worthwhile. This is the right thing. You will be glad you've done this when you're finished.*

My intuition usually kicks in during big or emotional decisions. If I ignore it, I may feel a lump in my throat or a tightness in my chest. I interpret this as my body's way of telling me, "This isn't the right course of action for you." Or, a lightness might come over me when I decide to go through with something, and my intuition says, "It might feel hard or scary to do this, but deep down, you *do* want to do it, and you'll be relieved you did."

## **Following your moods isn't always a bad thing**

Making smaller daily decisions that are healthy can feel just as challenging as the big stuff. We're not always going to be in the mood to empty that email inbox or finish that load of laundry.

This can lead to an internal battle: *Should I make myself do it, or not?*

I've found that sometimes it's wise to push through those feelings and get started with the task, anyway. I'll often find myself in a state of flow. My mood shifts on its own as I get the satisfaction of completing the task.

But other times, I try to get started and feel every cell of my body resisting. I've learned from experience that it's usually not worth pushing myself to do something when each moment feels like a struggle. I'll usually be able to do the task more quickly and with less effort when I'm in a different mood.

This is particularly true when the task is very demanding either physically, cognitively, or emotionally. If I'm not in the mood to clean out the garage (physically demanding), design a learning unit (cognitively demanding), or have a serious conversation with my partner about a problem in our home (emotionally demanding), I've found it's generally best to wait for a better mood.

The same is true when the folks around you are in a low mood—wait until that’s passed to bring up a dicey subject or make a big request, and you’ll likely get better results.

Often the difference between “Ugh, I really don’t want to” and “Okay, let’s get this done” is a good night’s sleep and a satisfying meal. Listen to your body when it’s calling you to rest or take care of other needs. When you honor the signals your body is communicating, you’re more likely to be in a better mood faster, and the task you were dreading today might feel considerably easier tomorrow.

We are humans, not machines. Therefore our moods, energy levels, emotional states, and physical limitations impact our productivity, and it’s good to be gentle with ourselves whenever possible.

**We can’t expect ourselves to knock out every item on a to-do list according to how much we believe we *should* be able to get done in a day. Our bodies will feel differently each day, particularly as we age. Our moods and productivity levels will differ each day, and throughout the day. You may notice an impact from the time of the month, season of the year, or from the weather and temperature.**

The more that you pay attention to how these external factors impact your natural moods, the more you can anticipate your high energy and low energy times, and work with your body instead of against it.

## **The mind-body connection**

Richard Carlson, Ph.D., reminds us that feelings vary according to natural mood cycles. It’s perfectly normal to have lower moods and higher moods which are closely connected to your physical state. When

you're tired, hungry, sick, or in pain, you're more likely to experience a low mood state in which it's much harder to control your feelings and choose your thoughts.

If you're being led by your feelings because you're out of sorts physically, make sure you address those issues as soon as possible, and in the meantime, be aware of how they affect your decision-making. If you've only slept for four hours each of the last few nights, don't make any major decisions, and consider your fatigue when you combat dysfunctional thinking.

Remind yourself: *I'm not feeling my best right now, and I'm more vulnerable to distorted thoughts and irrational feelings. I'm not going to get too invested in what I'm thinking and feeling. I'll take my presumptions and attitudes today with a grain of salt, because they're probably not going to be typical of me.*

Even though the focus of this book is on cognitive habits, the mind-body connection is extremely important and should always be factored in.

Any of type of physical discomfort (most commonly fatigue and hunger) can cause you to become more irritable and irrational. You may feel unable to make decisions, or feel compelled to make them quickly because the problems seem overwhelming and urgent.

Whenever you're at an especially low point in your mood cycle, you can choose to make allowances for yourself and simply wait to decide on a course of action.

However, this has to be a conscious choice, because when you're in a frustrated or angry mood, you often feel the need to fix everything *right now*. This urge is normal but erroneous, because we rarely solve problems effectively when we're experiencing bad moods.

It's wiser to take your mind off whatever's bothering you and let your natural mood state return. Eat something healthy, get some exercise and rest, and take care of yourself.

When you're in a better mood, problems will seem less important and you'll hold them in the proper perspective. New solutions and ideas will come to you because you're thinking clearly and no longer feeling overwhelmed by the magnitude of the issue at hand.

Sometimes you can't avoid making decisions and taking action during low mood periods, but try not to push yourself to do more than is absolutely necessary. Low moods often pass within a matter of hours or even minutes (much faster than what we assume while we're stuck in them.)

Your problems will still be there when you're in a higher mood, only then, you'll be better prepared to handle them.

## **How to follow wisdom rather than moods**

Doing whatever you're in the mood for can lead to procrastination, careless decision-making, unhealthy choices, and other counter-productive behaviors. The opposite of being led by your feelings is being led by wisdom.

Joyce Meyer has said, "Wisdom always chooses to do now what it will be satisfied with later on." When you're tempted to give in to a random mood, stop and think: *What course of action will I be satisfied with later? What's the best choice for me in the long run?*

Living by wisdom is easiest if you put your thoughts in check *before* they develop into feelings. So, let's take a look at how the strategies of dismiss, distract, reject, and replace can all work together to help you choose wise thoughts and overcome your moods.

Let's say you've been pressured into heading up a committee to oversee the school science fair. You've worked around seventy extra hours over the past few months to put together an incredible event, even though your district wouldn't fund it and you had to practically beg your colleagues to help out.

The night of the fair, you miss your own child's soccer game and show up at school to discover that no other faculty members are there to support you. You're left to run the entire evening by yourself...for the twenty families that actually showed up.

Feelings of frustration well up inside and you're nearly shaking with anger. You feel like quitting or transferring to another school where you won't have to do everything yourself and can get some support.

The idea that all your hard work was for nothing keeps floating around in your mind. You complain throughout a late dinner with your partner, and are so wrapped up in your own thoughts that you barely pay attention to your daughter as you put her to bed. When you lie down that night, sleep becomes impossible as you lay there ruminating endlessly on how overworked and under-appreciated you are.

Here's how you can use *dismiss*, *distract*, *reject*, and *replace* to help you find thoughts that feel better:

*Tonight was really disappointing. My colleagues and the parents didn't show much support. However, these thoughts are not serving me well. It's not helpful for me to lay in bed all night thinking about how angry I am; I'm punishing only myself and will end up being even more irritable tomorrow because I'm tired. The wise thing to do is **reject** these thoughts that my work was all for nothing.*

*The truth is, the parents who showed up were really appreciative of my efforts, and the smiles on the kids' faces told me they were happy to show off their hard work in science. I'm going to choose to **replace** these negative thoughts with thoughts about how well the science fair actually went with the people who did attend, because I want to be able to sleep tonight. In the morning when I get to school, I can create a plan for preventing this from happening again.*

*But for now, I'm going to make sure my last thought of the night about the science fair is a positive one, and then I'm going to **dismiss** any thoughts on the subject that happen to reoccur. I'm going to read a few pages of this novel to **distract** myself and then get a decent night's rest.*

Chances are good that the problem will seem less pressing and all-consuming in the morning, and you'll be able to handle it with a level head.

Here's another example to consider. Let's say your principal criticized you, and you haven't been able to think about anything else. All afternoon you've been in a bad mood and gave the kids busywork instead of actually teaching because you couldn't concentrate on the project you were supposed to complete with them.

You tried to take your mind off it at lunch and ended up crying in the bathroom. You tried venting to three coworkers and all that did was make you angrier. At this point, your head hurts and you feel sick just thinking about it.

Can you identify the process in this hypothetical situation where you lost control?

First, you allowed negative thoughts to continue unchecked in your mind. These thoughts created overwhelming feelings and emotions which made it even harder to stop your unwanted thoughts.

This continued, and a physical reaction to stress was created in your body, firmly entrenching you in the low mood that had been building all day.

But as soon as you recognize what's happening, you can choose different thoughts that will create better feelings:

*It's unhealthy for me to focus on how angry I felt when my principal offhandedly made that remark. This isn't as important as it feels: my sense of worth doesn't come from what my principal thinks. I KNOW I'm making a difference with my kids.*

*The wise thing to do is not let my feelings get me discouraged, and decide to change my thinking so that I feel better. I'm going to go for a run and get some fresh air to clear my mind.*

*While I'm outside, I'm going to choose to think about that moment today when James finally understood how to multiply fractions, and how excited he was. What can I do tomorrow to support him in that?*

*I want to think about a really engaging math activity I can use, and later, I'll check online for some ideas to get myself looking forward to tomorrow's lesson. If the thought about my principal returns, I'm going to totally ignore it and refocus on my hunt for some cool math ideas.*

Here's what the mind is doing in that example:

- Recognize the thought as harmful
- Notice any untruths or exaggerations in the thought
- Consciously reject it
- Speak truth that opposes the harmful thought
- Choose a replacement thought
- Engage in a positive, distracting activity
- Dismiss any further unwanted thoughts

The strategies of *dismiss*, *distract*, *reject*, and *replace* can be applied in lots of different ways. You'll notice the first restructuring example I gave here about the science fair is more formulaic; the second example about the principal takes a more organic approach.

There is no one right way to do this, and you can restructure your thinking using many different techniques. And of course, you can couple your reframing with taking action, and directly address problems with the people involved. Acceptance and change can go hand in hand!

As you experiment with different approaches, you'll find a number of them that work best for your personality.

## Practicing self-compassion when you slip up

While our moods can be a major influence on our lives, I hope you can see now that they're far less important than we often make them out to be.

**Moods are not necessarily reliable, logical, or based on what's good for you in the long run; they stem mostly from your thoughts. If you've been thinking distorted thoughts, your feelings are probably going to be distorted, too. If you don't like your mood, examine the thoughts that may have helped create it.**

This is a lifelong practice. There will be many times when you don't *feel like* being positive and responsible. Choosing to trust your intuition and live by wisdom rather than your mood is not a final decision you can make once and for all; it's a daily, moment-by-moment choice.

I used to get frustrated with myself: *I just decided yesterday that I wasn't going to do this anymore, and now here I go again!* With time I came to understand that it's not possible to achieve mastery in this area and always make wise, intuitive decisions.

We can only take each choice as it comes and do our best to respond wisely. When we follow our moods, berating ourselves afterward just compounds the dysfunctional thoughts and low mood state. Instead, we can acknowledge what happened and choose to move forward, being compassionate and forgiving of ourselves.

You don't need a new day, week, month, or school year to have a "fresh start." Your choices about what to think and how to behave are happening every moment you're awake. If you don't like a choice you made five minutes ago, you can make a different choice now in this moment, and resume your forward progression.



## **Afterword: The self-talk of an awakened teacher**

So how does all this advice fit together, and what does it look like when applied to daily life?

Here are some examples of how you can use the *Awakened* principles to construct positive, resilient self-talk throughout the school day:

### **5:30 am: Dreading having to get up and go to work**

*It's okay for me to feel tired today. I don't have to pay attention to the thoughts about how exhausted I am: I can just notice those thoughts and let them pass. I'm setting my intent: I accept whatever comes my way and trust that I can handle it. Today I'm going to act rather than react, have flexible expectations, and practice keeping a healthy state of mind.*

**7:35: A colleague called in sick and there's no substitute; eight of her students will be placed in your class**

*Hmm, okay. That throws a wrench in my plans, but at least the office told me before school started so I could have materials ready for her students. I can choose to repeat my expectation that this should not be happening, or I can accept it and deal with it. This is the reality today, and I have work to do, so I'm not going to get caught up in how unfair the situation is right now. After school, I can decide if and when I want to address it with my principal—for now, I'm focusing on the kids.*

**7:45: Parent calls and complains about something minor**

*The most important thing I can do is communicate to this parent that I care about his child's progress. This parent needs reassurance that I'm doing everything I can to support his child. I'm going to choose empathy and show patience toward him. I'm believing the best about his intentions. That's how I'd want my child's teacher to treat me.*

**8:00: Students burst into the classroom yelling and pushing**

*This is not the way I've trained students to treat each other or our learning environment. Rather than start my day by getting angry, I'm going to take a deep breath, and calmly ask them to go back out and come back in the way we've practiced. I'm not taking this as a personal affront; they were just wound up from the bus ride. My goal is not to punish, but to support them in learning appropriate behaviors. I can handle this calmly rather than matching their chaotic energy. This incident is not going to set the wrong tone for the day.*

**8:25: Seven students have not completed their morning bell work**

*This is disappointing, but not unbelievable. It's irrational to think that all students should complete all their work 100% of the time. I can't even meet that standard myself—I scrolled through social media last night instead of getting my own tasks done! So I'm not going to let this discourage or irritate*

*me, and I won't make judgments about the kids' motives or anticipate problems with this in the future. I'm going to handle it in this moment, and mentally move on.*

**9:07: Classroom phone and intercom have buzzed six times during an important lesson**

*Ugh, so annoying! Better not waste any MORE time by thinking about how much I hate interruptions. Otherwise I'll be on edge and probably lose my temper with the next person who interrupts class, and that's not fair to them. We have a staff meeting later this week and I can address the issue then. For now, I don't want to distract myself further...back to the lesson!*

**9:45: Discover that a colleague has borrowed materials without permission**

*This is the third time she's done this. I can get myself riled up about it, or choose thoughts that feel less reactive. I'll ask her not to do that again, but I won't rehearse the conversation in my mind repeatedly beforehand. And, I'm going to be aware of the story I'm telling myself about her, because I don't want to harbor resentment and jeopardize our working relationship which is really important to me. Why should I waste time trying to figure out why she acts the way she does, or complain about it to other teachers? I'll talk to her and set my boundaries, and then move on.*

**10:15: The district does a surprise walk-through evaluation**

*Wow, I was not expecting this! I sure would have liked for this person to arrive five minutes earlier when we were doing a more rigorous activity. Oh well, it is what it is! I'm not going to panic and worry about what that person thought. My students were working on a planned part of the lesson that was necessary for their learning, even if it wasn't impressive to an outside observer. I know I'm doing my job to the best of my ability, and I'm proud of my efforts. My self-confidence doesn't come from what a stranger says after spending two minutes in my classroom.*

**10:38: Student refuses to do any work, interrupts your instruction constantly, and gets an attitude when you correct him—AGAIN**

*I refuse to let this child's behavior cause me to hate my job or assume my whole day is ruined. I'm not giving him that power. This is his reality, and these are his choices. He'll have to deal with the consequences that we've already worked out together, and I don't have to see that as a personal problem for me. I can choose to respond in calm, compassionate ways that help him emotionally regulate and get back on task. It won't be easy or fun, but I CAN respond constructively, and I will! I have this kid for ten months out of my lifetime. I can deal with anything for ten months.*

**11:04: Paraprofessional is late to teach her small group**

*This has happened before, so I may need to set more realistic expectations here. I'd love for her to be on time, but I can't control what another adult does. And, I know from our past conversations that it's tough for her to wrap up a small group in Ms. Smith's classroom all the way on the other side of the building, and get over here to begin teaching immediately afterward with no break. I'm going to just accept the reality that she's often a couple minutes late, and plan accordingly so my class' schedule isn't thrown off. I'm going to get the rest of the class settled in their activity, and train the group who's waiting for the para to read books together quietly until she arrives. That way the kids aren't just sitting around wasting time, and they're ready to begin as soon as she's here. This isn't worth getting upset or indignant about. I'm certainly not on time for everything, either.*

**11:45: Co-workers are complaining in the faculty lounge during lunch**

*I'm tuning out and then changing the subject as soon as I can find a good opening. There's no point in reinforcing those negative thoughts that I, too, have about students sometimes—I'll just be impatient with the kids all afternoon if I listen to this. Oh, here comes someone else, I'll start a*

*conversation with them! Perfect. We've both been streaming that new TV series and I want to hear their opinion of the latest episode.*

**12:00 pm: Photocopier is jammed**

*Gahhh, now I won't have the papers I need for this afternoon's lesson! I'm tempted to over-generalize here and get into a rant about how I NEVER have the materials I need and nothing in this building EVER works, but I don't want to carry that stress with me. I can just smirk and shake my head—it's actually kind of comical how fast things break around here! I'm defusing my frustration by finding humor in the situation, and I'm going to focus my attention on creating an alternative plan of action. Let's see, if I won't have these copies, what can I do with students instead?*

**12:05: Discover that two students got in a fight during lunch and are down in the office**

*Well, that's disappointing. I'm glad it didn't happen under my watch, though, and the kids are already in the principal's office discussing it. I'll shut down any gossip among the rest of the class and get them focused on the warm-up. After school I'll talk to the principal. Until then, I'm not going to jump to any conclusions about who's at fault, or speculate about what happened. I don't have to hold this issue in my mind or interpret it as a problem. It's not my concern at the moment, and I'll handle it when I have more information.*

**1:17: Working with a student who is just not getting the concept**

*I've tried everything I can think of to help this kid—it's so frustrating that things still aren't clicking into place! But if I get upset, then I've got two problems to deal with: his lack of understanding, and my emotional reaction. It's unrealistic for me to expect all students to understand these concepts at the pace the curriculum demands. They're humans, not machines, and each individual progresses on their own developmental timeline. This child needs more time and different types of practice. I can let go of the assumption that*

*this is a problem. There's nothing wrong with him OR me: this is a normal part of the learning process, which happens at different rates.*

### **2:20: Assistant principal emails and asks to see you after school**

*Uh-oh—what did I do? Did a parent call to complain? Could this be about...no, wait. There's no need to jump to conclusions and assume the worst. She probably just wants to fill me in on the fight in the cafeteria at lunch. Chances are, this is not something terrible and I'm not in trouble. I'm going to put this out of my head until it's time to deal with it. It's just not helpful or useful for me to expend any mental energy trying to figure out what she wants to talk about. I've still got kids to teach for another half hour! Back to work.*

### **3:00: Boring, pointless committee meeting**

*There doesn't seem to be anything I can learn from this meeting. Maybe I can shift my focus to adding value. Is there something useful I can contribute? Do I have any advice or experiences that would help? Do I have any suggestions that could speed the process up a bit? Is there someone here that looks like they need encouragement? Might as well set my own purpose for the meeting so it's not a total waste!*

### **4:00: Need to leave school to get to an appointment, but have so many things left to do**

*As much as I hate to leave now, I accept that I've done everything I can do today. Rather than focus on all the things I left undone, I'm going to walk to my car and make a mental list of everything I accomplished. Let's see...I talked to my assistant principal and everything is fine—I wasn't in trouble, and I'm so glad I didn't stress and worry about it all afternoon! I got my grades entered into the computer; that was a relief. I made a connection with my new student during reading instruction, I helped Mr. Lamont troubleshoot his printer, we finally got started on the solar system project...oh, and I figured out how to help Marcus understand the difference between adjectives and*

*adverbs! This was actually a very productive day! Let me see what other good things I can recall...*

**6:45: Eating dinner; worried about a student's personal and home life**

*I can't control what's happening at students' homes, and upsetting myself with speculation only ruins my own dinner—it doesn't make things better for the kids. I have alerted the guidance counselor and made sure the family service worker is checking in regularly. I made time during the school day to connect with the student and monitor how things are going. I've already done what I can do for this student today. In this moment, the only thing I need to do is be present with my own family and enjoy the meal we're sharing. That way I won't be worn down and emotionally drained tomorrow when I'm with my students again.*

**8:20: Feeling resentful about finishing data entry work**

*I really don't want to be doing this right now. But there's no law of life that guarantees I only get to do fun things in my evenings. Though I don't like it, I accept that sometimes I need to bring work home in order to prepare properly for the next day. It will be easier to get this task done if I don't repeat to myself how much I hate it and wish I didn't have to do it. Once the data is entered, I shouldn't need to work in the evenings for a while. Plus, I've already made the decision not to work at all over the weekend. I'm being very intentional with my time, and not just bringing home tons of school stuff unnecessarily. This is an important task, and as soon as it's done, I'm going to relax.*

**10:45: Tired but not ready to sleep; worrying about a parent conference in the morning**

*I don't feel like going to bed now—I just want to lay here and scroll on my phone for a bit longer. But, I'm going to choose to override my mood and make a healthier choice. The best thing I can do for myself right now is get a good night's rest so I'll be fresh in the morning. I don't know how the conference is going to go, but I trust that I'll say and do the right thing when the time*

*comes. I've written down my key points so I can let it go for right now. The only thing I need to do is rest tonight, and eat a healthy breakfast in the morning. I trust that my inner wisdom will surface when I need it. Whatever happens tomorrow, I know I'll be able to handle it!*