Maintaining Well-being: Coping Strategies for Prolonged Traumatic Experiences from the Stories of Ukrainian Educators During the Wartime

Dissertation Presented

By

Natalya Rakevich

Submitted to the Graduate School of Education

Lesley University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

March 2025

Natalya Rakevich

Graduate School of Education
Lesley University
Ph.D. Educational Studies
Educational Leadership Specialization

Approvals

In the judgment of the following signatories, this Dissertation meets the academic standards that have been established for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Patricia Crain de Galarce, EdD Doctoral Committee Chair	_____	_____ Date
Dr. Joe Mageary Doctoral Committee Member	_____	_____ Date
Dr. Tricia McDonough-Ryan Doctoral Committee Member	_____	_____ Date
Dr. Valerie Shinas Associate Provost, Ph.D. Educational Studies	_____	_____ Date
Dr. Grace Enriquez Chair, Ph.D. Educational Studies	_____	_____ Date
Dr. Stephanie Spadorcia Vice Provost for Education, Lesley University	_____	_____ Date

Abstract

This qualitative, phenomenological study aimed to better understand how and whether educators can maintain well-being during prolonged trauma. This study examines the experiences of Ukrainian educators living in non-occupied territories during wartime. The following research questions guided the study: What coping strategies do educators use to take care of themselves? What coping strategies do educators use with their students? How do educators perceive mindfulness and storytelling? A conceptual framework was created to better understand the topics of stress, trauma, being, well-being, surviving, suffering, and coping mechanisms through a literature review. Data collection occurred in February and March 2024, two years after the full scale invasion of Ukraine began. Using convenience and snowball sampling, 163 educators completed an anonymous survey, and 12 participated in confidential one-on-one interviews on Zoom. Key coping mechanisms that help Ukrainian educators manage prolonged trauma during wartime were identified through their stories. After analyzing the data, three major findings emerged: 1) No coping mechanism works universally. 2) Maintaining well-being amidst prolonged traumatic experiences requires educators to sustain connections with others. 3) Coping mechanisms are most effective when practiced mindfully. These findings led to recommendations on how educators can cope with trauma and stress in their own lives and support their students in doing the same.

Key words: Well-being, Ukraine, Coping, Trauma, Mindfulness

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late godmother, Olga Rzhova, who was the light of my life, especially after my mother passed, and who could not stand the realities of this war. To my late father, Volodymyr Avramenko, who taught me so many things, but above all, discipline. My late mother, Larysa Avramenko, who believed in my potential more than I ever did. To my grandfather, Ivan Malook, a prominent educator in his time, whose DNA (I believe) shaped me into the educator I am today. And to my late grandmother, Vera Malook, whose words, “Вчитесь, дівчата, а не то будете волам хвости крутити. [*Vchytes', divchata, a ne to budete volam hvosty krutyty.* Study, girls, otherwise you will twist oxen’s tails.]” addressed to my sister and me, became our mantra for life and helped me pursue my education to PhD level. May their memory be a blessing.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

No one can become fully aware of the very essence of another human being unless he loves him. By his love he is enabled to see the essential traits and features in the beloved person; and even more, he sees that which is potential in him, which is not yet actualized but yet ought to be actualized. Furthermore, by his love, the loving person enables the beloved person to actualize these potentials. By making him aware of what he can be and of what he should become, he makes these potentialities come true. — Victor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

Here I would like to express my gratitude to all people I have encountered throughout my life journey for their love. Although I can not name each of them here, I deeply appreciate every meeting and connection. I am especially thankful to all my teachers on physical and non-physical levels.

I give special thanks to my advisor, mentor, and professor Patricia Crain de Galarce. I do not have enough words to fully express my gratitude. This dissertation would have looked very different without her guidance. I am grateful for frequent meetings and careful reading of all my writings; for believing in my writing and potential; for emotional and mental support; for understanding me at a glance; and for introducing me to countless books and articles, shaping me into a better educator and leader through her classes and meetings.

I am grateful to my committee members, Joe Magery and Tricia McDonough Ryan, for helping me find the right questions and approach for this study; for guiding me in honing my writing; for making me a better scholar; and for meetings and the beautiful energy they have shared not only with me, but also with thousands of Ukrainian educators and psychologists over the past three years.

There are teachers who teach simply through their presence. You feel that you become smarter just by being next to them, by listening to how they recite poems by heart and analyze the etymology of words to uncover the meaning behind speech. One of the teachers who affected

me in this way is Sal Terrasi, my professor, who helped me support Ukrainian educators and children at the very beginning of the full-scale invasion and gave me the opportunity to be part of the LIFTS research team.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Colleen R. O'Neal for her support and the knowledge she shares with Ukrainian educators through Project VeLa for Ukraine. I am grateful to Alissa Fodor, Tamila Avanova, and Marina Livshits for their warmheartedness, advice, and support of Ukrainian educators and psychologists at VeLa from the beginning of the full-scale invasion to today, as well as for their guidance on self-care practices and coping mechanisms.

I am grateful to all the professors and teachers who taught me, from preschool to my Master's degree studies in Ukraine and the United States. I am especially thankful to all my professors at the Ph.D. level at Lesley University: Caroline Heller — for boosting my understanding and curiosity about knowledge and research; John Ciesluk — who helped me hone my writing, explore my identities more deeply, and think of myself as a leader; Paul Naso, whose classes made me reflect more deeply on the purposes of education; Steve Gould, whose classes helped me understand my leadership identity and who shared his six-point conceptual framework; Joann Gammel, for helping me understand the developmental features of personality; Susan Rauchwerk, for helping me better understand how systems can influence individuals; Kaoru Miyazawa, for deepening my understanding of qualitative research; Kabba Colley, for helping find my research topic, clarify the structure of my dissertation, and accept that it would not be "a Noble Prize paper"; to Yazmin Colon Garcia, who supported me and ensured that I stay on the right path from the beginning to the end of this beautiful journey. Each professor offered me a unique opportunity to learn and grow through their classes.

While working on my dissertation, I am grateful for the opportunity to have found new friends. I would like to thank my classmate, Amy Goldsweig, who made all my residencies more fun and my writing more grammatically correct; Nick Suchecki, for sharing his knowledge and being my research partner in several studies; to Lindsay Stewart, for her support, encouragement, and for sharing her knowledge and ideas; to Jen Welsh, for her positive energy and kind words; and other members of BAC: Adina Feldman, Kenisha Coy, and Kimberly Post. I am also grateful to all members of Cohort ‘21, especially Andrew Perron, Deborah Arlauskas, Leslie Reid, Matt Londo, and Susan Edwards, for being people who bring positive change to the world around them. Finally, I would like to thank all my students, from the youngest to the oldest — I have learned so much from each and every one of them.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the help of my spiritual sister, Hanna Surkova, whose invisible support has been constant and strong. She gave me the opportunity to assist thousands of Ukrainian educators and children by connecting Ukrainians with American colleugues. I am also grateful to all my Ukrainian colleagues: Daria Sustretova, a remarkable young educator who is dedicated to improving the lives of others and who constantly helps me, even at the expense of her own sleep; Iryna Datsenko, a beautiful and energetic teacher; and many others, who have become so close to my heart, “like family” over these years, even though I have never met them in person. I am deeply thankful to all Ukrainian educators who participated in the survey, and even more so to those who agreed to be interviewed.

I am deeply grateful to my best friend, Irina Asipenko, for checking on the progress of my dissertation and encouraging me to move further and faster, and to her husband, Pavel Volkov, for their hospitality. I am thankful to my yoga teacher, Didi Ananda Aciria, for her spiritual guidance. I appreciate my sister, Olga Mazur, for believing in me and being proud of

me. I am grateful to my uncle, Olexandr Malook, for all the stories he remembers and shares, for being alive, and for encouraging me to write. I am grateful to Danylo Hladchenko for encouraging me to keep writing no matter what. I appreciate my daughter-in-law, Emma Hunt, and my son, Roman Ganchin, my nieces Anna and Victoria Mazur; Alexa and Mia Malook for being there for me. I am thankful to my son, Ryan Rakevich, for caring deeply about my dissertation and asking questions that helped me understand my work even better. I am also thanksful to my mother in law, Inna Meltser-Rakevich, for nurturing my soulmate and continually supporting Satvic energy in our very big family.

Finally, I am endlessly grateful to my husband, Filipp Rakevich, for being my friend, my partner, my teacher, my supporter on all levels, and my reader and editor — without him, neither this dissertation nor my studies over the past 12 years would have been possible.

At the end, I express my deepest gratitude and bow to the Creator of All That Is for the beautiful experience of being a human being in this physical body during this time, and for granting me the psychological, physical, and spiritual strength to complete this work. Hallelujah!

March, 2025

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

FOREWORD

Two Years of War, But Actually Ten

A poem by Natalya Rakevich

I don't want to write;
I don't want to rhyme;
I don't want to make
This experience better or bright …
Means 10 years, two years of full scale invasion.
Gray hairs that belong to a ten year old girl.
Cutting people with garden scissors for surgery.
Pieces of bodies of russian soldiers on Ukrainian trees.
Raped two month old, and girls… millions of girls… and the very old man…
"If you had fun, it doesn't count as a war crime."
Drowned farms with animals and people.
Six hours schooldays underground in cellars.
Children with teeth removed by russian[1] soldiers.
Killed four years old together with family in the car … thousands… ?
Maybe millions? Who can count? Especially those who are missing in action?
Several days on the box in the truck to escape from moscow.
Sleepless nights and burnt out.
Packages, containers of medications, food, and clothes.
(Was there ammunition as well?)
Meetings to support educators.
Mined fields and steps.
MY STEPS toward Victory?
Hope beyond hope.
February 22, 2024

[1] I decapitalized the words 'Russia' and 'Moscow,' as well as all words containing the root 'Russia,' in my dissertation to show my support for my Motherland and express my political opinion regarding Russia as a terrorist state.

About the Author

Why? Throughout my life I have heard the question “Why?” again and again from so many people. “Why do you teach? Why do you help others? Why do you care? Why do you write? Why do you need a dissertation? Why do you need a doctorate in Education?” My answer is simple - I am an educator. I am a lucky person because, since early childhood, I have never been able to imagine myself doing anything other than teaching. I believe my mission is to teach and help others reach their highest potential. I believe that to teach effectively, one must continually engage in learning. I believe that in every person, there is potential.

For as long as I can remember, I have been helping those in need and teaching those who were ready to learn. For me, the words ‘teacher’, ‘leader’, and ‘healer’ are synonymous. I believe that every teacher has to be a leader, and every leader has to be a teacher. Furthermore, I believe that to fully harness life’s potential and embrace learning, one should become his or her own teacher. Learning occurs constantly, in countless ways, even when we do not realize it. Throughout life, we cannot remain at the same level of awareness. We either improve or degrade (N. Manek, personal communication, November 23, 2022).

When students encounter the right teachers along their journey, they grow and transform into happy, self-sufficient, and creative individuals capable of making the world a better place for themselves and others. I recognize the importance of not only teaching children but also educating educators, parents, counselors, psychologists, administrators, and other adults who work with children and play vital roles in their lives.

This dissertation was written as a part of the requirement for a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership. I am an educator because I believe that education changes both the present and the future. I believe that education has the power to either save or destroy our

civilization. This is why it is essential for every educator, and especially for every educational leader, to know how to “pause and ponder” (S. Terrassi, personal communication, May 9, 2024). Being able to stop and observe one’s own stories, identities, motives, beliefs, and actions, and how these impact others — is crucial. After observing it is important to decide whether any changes are necessary. I believe that before teaching others, educators should first learn how to maintain their own well-being, so they can effectively help others do the same.

No matter what happens with us during our journey from point B (birth) to point D (death) (K. Vikma, personal communication, April 20, 2023), while being in this physical body on this planet, we always learn (Antarova, 1995; Dewey, 1944; Erikson and Erikson, 1997; Hawley, 2001; Kegan, 2013; and Stibal, 2009). The question is not whether we learn, but what we learn and at what pace. I hope this dissertation will serve as a valuable resource for teachers, educators, educational leaders, and anyone who chooses to become her own teacher. This path is not an easy one: as soon as one decides to embark on it, she will have to commit to continuous learning and face the challenges presented by the circumstances of her life.

Below, I will explain why the topic of well-being and its maintenance is important to me. I will also discuss my background, positionality, philosophical perspectives, theoretical perspectives and biases, the history and background of the problem, and provide a description of the VeLa well-being project in Ukraine. Additionally I will outline the statement of the problem, the purpose and objectives of the study, the guiding research questions, the definition of terms, and the expected contributions to the field.

Why Study Well-being

Those who know me well are aware that I feel as if I have two birthdays. The first one is the day I was born in Central Ukraine. The second marks the time when, at age 19, I survived

three surgeries within six weeks, and spent several weeks teetering between life and death. When I was discharged from the hospital, the doctor who saved my life said that I will be a disabled person from now on, but should be grateful for being alive. Since then, the subject of my physical, psychological, and mental health, how to support and improve it, became an important part of my existence. I constantly learn techniques that help me to maintain my well-being. In essence, I was able to not only regain my health, but became the healthiest I have ever been.

Since then, I became passionate about not only my own personal growth and well-being, but about the development of other people through education. Maintaining well-being does not happen suddenly. It is a routine process of learning what coping mechanisms work and when. There are commonalities in coping mechanisms that work for everyone under certain conditions, but there are also personal differences in how coping mechanisms are utilized.

For example: breathing exercises can benefit all people during stressful situations, but one person may prefer square breathing while another opts for belly breathing; arts and crafts activities are universally beneficial, but some will choose drawing while others prefer building bird houses or knitting; physical exercise works for everyone, yet one person will run for miles, while another finds joy in dancing. The important part of using coping mechanisms is the ability to know what works in a given moment and being able to stay involved in a process not only physically, but mentally and emotionally. In other words, be able to practice them mindfully. This is why I believe that practicing mindfulness and meditation complements any kind of other coping mechanisms and therefore help to maintain well-being.

The longer I practice mindfulness and meditation the more I catch myself on what I am actually thinking and saying to myself and others. I become mindful about my storytelling and how it affects my own life and lives of others. At the same time I became more attentive to the

fact that what I am saying and what people are hearing are not always the same. I also noticed that sometimes interlocutors do not hear me at all. They are just too preoccupied with their own thoughts. I came to a realization that people are sometimes unable to receive the information that I try to communicate because of their level of awareness and previous experiences.

During my five years of working as a success coach, I taught my students simple mindfulness techniques that helped them to be more aware of their surroundings, emotions, and actions. I believe that practicing mindfulness is a great tool for addressing the socio-emotional, cognitive, and physical aspects of learning and teaching. It can help to improve students' academic performance and the general well-being of students and educators. I feel that practicing mindfulness can help students and educators maintain well-being, build acceptance, and strengthen resilience. When these virtues are strengthened, they can help a practitioner to become more compassionate and shift their worldviews and stories, and life changes will follow. By being resilient and accepting others as they are, we can form genuine connections with them. It is important to connect with others even when they are very different, because there is always a point of connection to be found. Without the ability to truly connect with others, it is impossible for human beings to fully experience well-being.

Upbringing

In one of my favorite books, *Man's Search for Meaning,* Viktor Frankl (2006) wrote, "One should not search for an abstract meaning of life. Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated" (p. 108). Since childhood, I was able to value my uniqueness as well as the uniqueness of other people around me. I was able to communicate and understand anyone in spite of their socio-economic class, culture, or age. Looking at this

from today's perspective, I am thinking that it happened because my socio-cultural background is both rich and complex.

The development of my personality was largely influenced by my maternal grandmother on one side and my father on the other. What I learned from them about society often conflicted because my grandmother came from a wealthy Ukrainian family, while my paternal grandfather was from a poor russian village. Since russia began shelling Ukrainian cities in February 2022, I started to observe conflicts in my upbringing and that gave me a chance to discern what is my mission and concrete assignment (Frankl, 2006, p. 108). The one idea on which my grandmother and my father agreed was the importance of learning. Apparently that is why I always believed in the power of education that can be used as a magic wand to save the world or as an instrument to destroy people emotionally, intellectually, and physically. I believe that the world's well-being depends on educators.

Intellectual Orientation: Training and Experience

I am an American educator who emigrated from Ukraine due to low socioeconomic status, who was compelled to learn russian after moving from a rural to an urban area. Since then, russian language and culture, for better or worse, have become a part of my identity. I was nurtured by a Soviet day care, elementary, and middle school, but I attended a Ukrainian high school. What I was taught in the History, Geography, and Literature classes in these two school systems was often diametrically opposed. I am grateful for this experience, as it taught me critical thinking and understanding that what is said in school or reported in the news is not always true and can change over time.

Ukrainian was my only language until I was five, while living with my maternal grandparents in a village. When I moved to a city in central Ukraine, I discovered that only

“cheapskates” spoke Ukrainian, while all the “good people” spoke russian. It was upsetting to realize that the language I loved was considered to be of lower status. Later, in high school, as the Soviet regime began to collapse, I found my voice in reading poetry and books forbidden by the Soviets. I also found my voice in writing poems in Ukrainian, some of which were published in books and national newspapers. After earning my High School Diploma, I studied at a pedagogical university, where I was trained to teach russian and Ukrainian languages and literature. Having a deep understanding of both languages, I value them and approach their study separately from my feelings about the ongoing war between Ukraine and russia.

I applied everything I learned at the university to educate hundreds of children in Massachusetts. I established the Youth Talent School (YTS), where children could receive a well rounded education that included mental, artistic, physical, and social development. The skills students learnt at YTS supported their well-being throughout adolescence and into adulthood. Founding YTS allowed me to grow from an educator into an educational leader. I led dozens of teachers and coaches who transformed lives and inspired their students.

Even though my school produced wonderful results, I felt that I needed to know more about the educational system in the US because I wanted to help more children receive a well-rounded education. I wanted to understand what could be improved in the US school system. In 2012, I closed the school and embarked on my self-improvement and learning adventure. I received a bachelor’s degree in Math from Lesley University and a master’s degree in School Counseling from Salem State University. Developing myself intellectually always helped me to value the importance of psychological and spiritual growth. I was always looking to improve my students’ and my psychological well-being. I feel that mindfulness is one of the most simple and important practices that should be learned and practiced by all educators.

I started my journey to mindfulness by obtaining a Reiki certificate in 1997. Reiki is a Japanese technique that translates to English as "spiritually guided life force energy" (Borang, 2013; The International Center for Reiki Training, n.d., para 2); it is a non-religious technique that promotes healing, reduction of stress, and relaxation. Since then I have learned and practiced various meditative techniques, and read literature on psychology, spirituality, meditation, and mindfulness. I became a ThetaHealing Practitioner. ThetaHealing is a meditative practice and spiritual philosophy that harnesses concentrated thought and prayer (ThetaHealing, 2025).

I also took the Mindfulness Fundamentals and Mindfulness for Educators classes. I completed 500 hours of Yoga and 300 hours of Meditation Teacher Training. These practices have led me to an understanding of the importance of a routine in everyday life, especially during unpredictable and traumatizing times. Practicing my routines helped me to be more mindful of my experiences and those of others around me. My mindfulness practice has positively affected every aspect of my life and enabled me to teach these skills using my first-hand experience. Practicing mindfulness influenced my connections with other people, my values and philosophical perspectives.

Philosophical Perspectives

It felt like the more I learn, the less I know. Questions like: “What is knowledge and truth? How to observe without being involved? What is important when completing research? Why did I want to be a researcher? What do I really want to research?”, coexisted for a while in my mind. I will discuss all of them in further paragraphs.

Knowledge

What is knowledge? How does the knower and knowledge affect each other? According to Joey Sprague (2011), “Knowledge, in this perspective, is not the vision of individuals. It is

rather a form of communication and connection, a search for harmony in a community" (p. 89). Knowledge is flexible and constantly evolving. It is shaped by people, for people. Therefore knowledge has to include multiple perspectives and may be replaced by better knowledge. Sprague separates knowledge, knowers, and known. He explains that knowers are physically located in space and system. Knowledge is dependent on the identity of the knower. Those, who know, are affected by place and time. The same person can understand the same knowledge differently over the lifetime. Our realities are shaped by our experiences, people who we meet, socio-economic circumstances, and even by food that we eat.

In Daniel Burmester's play *Knowing* (2020) Knowledge says to the Student: "You will know less as you get to know me. I'm told I'm not always the best company" (p. 30). When we are curious, when we are open to new experiences, when we learn more, our intellectual horizons open. And at some point we understand that we don't know anything. We understand that there are so many possibilities and points of view that can affect reality. What one person might read in a book, hear in a poem, or see in an art masterpiece, another might not notice.

As a leader and a human being, I am always open to new information. I often revisit my knowledge with the question "How do I know what I know?" The answer, most of the time, is that my knowledge is based on my own memories and experiences that are constructing my current storytelling about my life and therefore my beliefs about my reality and the realities of those around me.

According to Berlin (1995), different people find knowledge in different places. One may discover knowledge in a laboratory, another in a church, a third within themselves, believing in nature and intuition (p. 48). Sometimes, knowledge comes to the knower, and she intuitively

knows the truth. She knows the right answer. However, the perspective of truth can vary from person to person.

Truthfulness

When I talk about truth, I am not referring to simple facts or data. Sprague (2011) emphasizes, "The same data can be used to support contradictory hypotheses" (p. 80). Facts can be raw and unrefined. Data can be interpreted in multiple ways. When a research hypothesis is not supported by an experiment, the researcher has the power to interpret the data in a manner that may still support the hypothesis. This is why self-reflection is vital for any researcher. A researcher should continuously ask themselves the following questions: "How will my research affect the lives of others? What do I truly want to know? Will my research be beneficial?"

One of the basic yogic principles is *Satya*, which means truthfulness. The principle of truthfulness tells Yogis to always speak the truth, but at the same time do no harm. Patanjali (2012) explains, "If by being honest we will cause trouble, difficulty or harm to anyone, we should keep quiet" (p. 124). This is why I believe it is vital for a researcher to remember that truth should be kind; truth should help other people to improve their lives and thrive. It is not an easy task. A good researcher should be able to become an observer and explore all dimensions of truth that relate to her research.

Become an Observer

We are subjects that observe others. What we see is determined by our experiences, by who we are, and by what we hope to see. Sprague (2011) explains this: "A knower has a particular vantage point with regard to the object" (p. 85). The location of the observer gives her access to certain knowledge. An open-minded observer sees more possibilities in the results of her research. To create valid research, one should be able to listen to the perspectives of others.

We all live in the same world, but in different realities. Understanding the viewpoints of others, where they come from and what shapes their thinking, helps me understand those around me and myself through diverse lenses.

While writing this dissertation, I tried to remain mindful of the realities of different people, to have more chances to benefit others with my research. As Kenomagwen (2013) wrote, "Experiments are not about discovery but about listening and translating the knowledge of other beings" (p. 158). By looking beyond my own truth and being open to the knowledge of others, I am able to uncover multiple answers to the questions posed in this research and in life. This is why it is important to observe. Observe our own thoughts; observe others, their actions and words, while remaining neutral. The main goal of observation is to develop the ability to observe oneself. Observing myself helps me to understand my values and beliefs.

Values

As a person and an educator, I value love, optimism, and learning. My professional and personal values, beliefs, morals, and ethics are the same. For example, I believe that educators cannot practice trust at work while ignoring trust in personal relationships, and vice versa. My values are built on my beliefs, and my beliefs and values are fundamental to my morals, ethics, and commitments as a human being, educator, leader, and scholar.

Through years of working in education as a formal and informal leader, I have strived to base my actions on the principle of practicing leadership without authority (Heifetz, 1994) by building my practice on my core belief: love. I value my own ability (that I constantly work on) and the ability of others to act from a place of unconditional love. This is not an easy way of thinking, and as a leader and educator, I need to continuously evaluate and re-evaluate my own thoughts and biases. Acting from the point of unconditional love gives me the opportunity to

practice as a leader and educator who supports the light that is present in others.

The feeling of unconditional love is possible only when one is able to go beyond their own consciousness and observe others and oneself from the outside. Acting with love helps not only me, as an educator and a human being, but also those who I work with. The act of self-love is essential for practicing love towards others, our students, and our coworkers. If practicing unconditional love sounds ridiculous or impossible, the closest feeling to it that could be practiced is compassion, for oneself and others.

Practicing love is most needed to be directed toward those we feel inclined to hate or resent. Practicing love is important in situations where we feel we cannot control our emotions and think 'us' right and 'them' wrong. Practicing unconditional love, or at least compassion, is easier when approached with positivity toward everything that happens to us and everyone we encounter.

I value positivity and optimism in myself and others, and consistently work with my students to develop this life-changing trait. Optimism enables me to see "a light at the end of the tunnel" and to guide others toward it. I believe that we are creators of our lives and realities, through the control of our thoughts and feelings. When we are optimistic about our lives, the whole Universe helps us to live through hardships and simply become stronger for new experiences. Teaching my students and subordinates to be optimistic, allowed me to see how they became owners of their own lives. One positive person, especially an educator and a leader, can change the lives of hundreds of people around them. This is why educators need to take care of themselves in order to effectively help others.

My third value is learning. I believe that the entirety of our life is nothing more than a lesson that helps us to evolve into better and more conscious beings. I believe that educators

should be attentive to what type of learning they are encouraging in their students. Are they giving them the knowledge that is ready-made, or are they encouraging students to view learning as a verb, as an action, as a never-stopping service to oneself? I believe that knowledge is out there to be discovered. I also think that every person discovers knowledge uniquely, from their own vantage point, shaped by their previous experiences and memories.

When I struggle to understand how others interpret information so differently, I try my best to observe our perceptions without being emotionally involved, from the point of unconditional love. As an educator and a leader, I think that educators should learn from their students, parents, peers, and coworkers just as students should learn from their teachers. I believe that even when we think we are not learning, we are still learning something, even if it is merely how not to learn. To be able to teach, one should be able to learn.

Beliefs

I believe that nurturing and teaching can only be done through personal examples. One cannot teach what she does not practice. I believe that educators should have high expectations for themselves as well as for their students. I believe that education should be practiced within a community because we are social beings. Just as my students and others around me learn from me, I also learn from them. A real community can only exist when trust is practiced within, and building trust is possible only when everyone is clear about their thoughts, words, and actions. Through collaboration and social interactions with others, educators can construct knowledge that can benefit everyone, and will be practical and useful.

I believe that one needs direct experience to understand the object of inquiry. We can comprehend others only through the prism of our own reality. If I never experienced hunger, I would not understand those who are hungry. If I do experience it, I will understand them through

my memories. I know how it feels and I might expect that the other person experiences the same emotions and has similar feelings, but I could be wrong. I can ask a person to describe how it feels, but what will be said and what will be heard will not be the same.

I believe that the nature of our existence is to experience our lives in the physical body. We are a combination of consciousness, physical matter, and light. We are here to become better beings and to help others to live their lives. In the best-case scenario, we are improving the lives of others and helping them to evolve through learning. For example, for me immigration was a transformative moment when I had to learn everything from scratch. I had to learn a new language, new culture, how to nurture my son, and how to live without being supported by my parents, but instead to support my parents financially in Ukraine.

VeLa Well-being in Ukraine

Even though I immigrated from Ukraine more than 20 years ago, my bonds with the Ukrainian land and people remain strong. When the full scale invasion started, I felt a need to help Ukrainians, especially children. In April 2022, I volunteered with Ukrainian refugees in Poland and initiated the socio-psychological project ‘VeLa’ to support Ukrainian educators and psychologists during wartime. The main goal of the project is to provide support by US educators, psychologists and psychiatrists to their Ukrainian colleagues, who have been living with prolonged trauma since the beginning of the war.

VeLa, when translated into English, refers to “the Sail, a southern constellation” (Dictionary, 2023). Constellation Vela was named after sails on the ship Argo from the story of Jason and the Argonauts who sailed from Greece to get the Golden Fleece (Constellation Guide, 2024). Jason and the Argonauts overcame many daring challenges and brought the fleece to Iolcus (Greek Legends and Myths, n. d.). Similar to the heroes of Greek Mythology, the goal of

VeLa in Ukraine is to support educators and psychologists living in extremely stressful and traumatic environments, helping them maintain their well-being and assist others in doing the same.

As Cora Hatch (1859) mentioned in her article "you could not direct the wind, but you could trim your sail so as to propel your vessel as you pleased, no matter which way the wind blew" (p. 2). The VeLa project, much like a sail, helps Ukrainian educators harness the wind and find support in the midst of a storm. It also unites people, much like constellations unite stars, creating a network of those who want to and are able to help others.

For me personally, VeLa represents the first two letters of the two main figures in my life. 'Ve' stands for Vera, my grandmother, a doctor who taught me the importance of unconditional love and offering help to those in need, even if they had hurt me in the past. 'La' stands for Larysa, my mother, who was both a teacher and a leader, advocating for those she worked with. She taught me to smile, to be curious, fearless, and generous no matter what.

Although my grandmother and mother have passed away, their light, knowledge, hopes and desire to maintain well-being not just for themselves but for others around them lives in me. Through weekly meetings, various workshops and seminars, VeLa supports thousands of Ukrainian educators and psychologists in discovering coping mechanisms to maintain their own well-being and that of those they work with.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

> [O]ur pity at another's suffering certainly causes us pain, but ultimately it expands our hearts and minds, gives us more understanding and leaves us in peace. — Patanjali, *The Yoga Sutras*

This phenomenological study of how Ukrainian educators cope during the wartime has expanded my heart and mind. I hope that when reading these amazing stories documented on the following pages, the reader will gain greater understanding and hope. The strategies and insights Ukrainian educators shared to maintain well-being for themselves and their students through prolonged traumas serve as inspiration and learning for all educators.

On February 24, 2022, a dormant conflict awoke with a roar when russia began shelling Ukrainian cities. Fear that Ukraine will be overtaken by russia, its language, culture, and literature once again forbidden, took hold of me. I began calling my relatives and friends daily. During these calls, I listened to them and provided psychological first aid. Within several weeks, I realized that I was experiencing secondary trauma, just like many others around me who were impacted by this war. I also realized that I am traumatized by the fact that this is not merely a conflict between two countries, but also an internal conflict for many Ukrainians, including myself, who are historically tightly connected with the russian language and culture.

Even though I had been practicing mindfulness for years and could observe the negative feelings overwhelming my heart, it did not prevent me from experiencing them. The demon of war cast a shadow over the compassion, acceptance, and unconditional love I had been cultivating and practicing as habits for the past decade. I have been teaching russian language and literature in the US for more than 20 years and I noticed that I began to feel disgust with

everything I taught. I cried when I heard russian children's songs I once loved as a child, knowing that, at that very moment, millions of Ukrainian children were suffering because of russian aggression. I experienced hate, disgust, fear, shame, contempt, pessimism and many other negative emotions that consumed me from within. I started to experience not just emotional disbalance, but also physical health problems.

Now, I can say that I was able to regain balance and help others only because, throughout this time, I meditated and practiced mindfulness despite everything I was experiencing. As explained by Kraemer-Holland (2021), I was able to accept myself, others, and the circumstances. I changed my story-telling and found meaning in my existence. Brady (2021) wrote, “In my experience, if the readers are given the opportunity to make their own meaning, a story is more likely to connect to their lives and remain alive and at work in their consciousness” (p. xvii). I found meaning in helping Ukrainian educators and psychologists. I organized the socio-psychological project VeLa to support Ukrainian educators and psychologists, enabling them to better support the children they work with.

Statement of the Problem

Ukrainian educators are currently living through prolonged trauma while caring for and teaching their students during wartime. The war in Ukraine has been traumatizing millions of children (International Rescue Committee, 2022; Khan, 2022; Long, 2023; and Rolland, 2023). Some of them had to flee the country, some of them became internally displaced, some lost property, others everything, including relatives. Most of them are still enrolled in Ukrainian schools and attend classes in-person, hybrid, or online. Educators report that their trauma is prolonged and enormous.

Living through a period of war negatively impacts Ukrainian educators and their students

on emotional, mental, and physical levels (UNICEF, n. d.). The complexity of trauma for Ukrainian educators includes uncertainty about their financial status and constant worrying about relatives and friends, especially those who are at the frontline, in occupied territories, or in frontline zones. This is compounded by constant air raid alerts, which require bringing children underground during class time and lead to sleepless nights. Educators who care for traumatized students often ignore or compartmentalize their own traumas to be supportive of others. This is why coping mechanisms are an important part of life for Ukrainian educators. Without learning and using healthy coping skills, war or traumatic events can spoil and even ruin the lives of those who experience it.

Learning about how Ukrainian educators promote their well-being during the stressful times of war gave me hope that exploring their experiences as a phenomenon will inspire educators worldwide to learn from Ukrainian educators' stories and transform their own stress and trauma. When I listened to the stories of Ukrainian educators, I noticed similarities between their thoughts and mine. Even though I was thousands of miles away from physical danger, I could feel their pain and understand how their everyday traumatic experiences were also affected by intergenerational and historical trauma. While observing how historical, intergenerational, and vicarious trauma impacted my physical and psychological health, I recognized the need to use certain coping mechanisms to maintain my well-being. I also became more attentive to the coping techniques employed by my Ukrainian colleagues. I realized that maintaining well-being and being aware of one's own trauma is an important topic not only for Ukrainian educators, but also for educators around the globe.

Theoretical Perspective and Biases

Social Constructivism and Pragmatism are two philosophical perspectives that resonate most deeply with my values, training, and beliefs (Creswell and Poth, 2017). In my view knowledge is socially constructed (Sprague, 2011). Being a social constructivist helps me to honor the individual values of those I research and co-construct reality by listening to educators, who endure enormous amounts of trauma on a daily basis.

In my research, I employed various methods for data collection. As a pragmatist, I was driven to find an answer to my research questions that helped me to understand "what is useful, practical, and 'works'" (Chumney, 2015). I understand that my research can be affected by my biases and contexts: political, historical, social, and others. I believe that knowledge is out there to be discovered. I also think that each person discovers knowledge differently, from their vantage point, shaped by their previous experiences and memories.

Knowledge is subjective. I definitely agree that questions shape answers, and "right" questions can give you "right" answers. On the other hand, even if you receive the "wrong" answer, you can still find a way to interpret it as needed in qualitative research. As Creswell and Poth (2017) described, "This is how knowledge is known - through the subjective experiences of people" (p. 21). I do not think that there is an absolute truth. There are facts, but these are distorted by the individual's brain. For example, the fact that russia is shelling Ukraine is perceived differently in russia, Ukraine, and the US. Shelling impacts people differently. Someone lost their life; someone lost their home; someone is happy that there are Ukrainian casualties; someone doesn't want to hear about it because they have enough problems already.

Most people develop knowledge collectively, and frequently it is developed for them by other people and instilled through media and other channels (Sprague, 2011). People accept it as

their own. Rarely individuals can step back from the knowledge constructed by society and think independently. An example of socially constructed knowledge is the fact that most russians believe that their army is defending russia from Ukrainian aggression on Ukrainian soil. They exist in a reality that supports this view, and at this point I understand and forgive them.

Indeed our choices influence outcomes. When we are saying that we do not have a choice, we are still making a choice to not have a choice. This is what I teach to my students. Frequently, people choose what is easier and justify their actions by saying that they did not have other options. Humans are social entities (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Patanjali, 2012; Rogers, 1980). We need others to survive and to thrive, to have a purpose; this is why surroundings matter. Humans can be understood as individuals affected by their experiences in society. How we are influenced by the forces present in our society depends on our character and previous experiences. This influence is shaped by what we have learned from our ancestors, teachers, and friends, as well as how we have processed that information. People have the agency to change themselves.

I realize that what is right for me could be wrong for someone else. For me, the right things are those that improve the physical, psychological, artistic, and mental well-being of people around me. Wrong things are those that make them miserable and unhappy in the short and long term. I do not believe that research can be neutral; it is always influenced by the researcher’s point of view. As Creswell and Poth (2017) explained, research influenced the researcher's positionality, including their identity, memories, beliefs, and experiences. As the famous expression goes, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”, and ugliness is in the eye of the beholder just as well.

The constructivist framework, in which the researcher's understanding intertwines with that of the participant' to create meaning (Debesay et al., 2008; Dewey, 1910; Piaget, 1971; and Vygotsky, 1962), guided this study. By combining this framework with insights from Ukrainian educators and psychologists, I was able to synthesize knowledge about sustaining well-being during prolonged traumatic experiences (Laverty, 2003). During this time of war, the educators in Ukraine are learning how to maintain their own well-being and how to help their students and other stakeholders. I collected stories from educators to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019). Together, we co-constructed an understanding and conceptualization that describes the phenomenon of coping amidst the trauma or war (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to learn how educators living during active wartime deal with prolonged daily trauma that affects their lives and the lives of their students. Interviews with Ukrainian educators gathered descriptions of healing techniques they used to transform their own trauma and assist their students in transforming theirs.

One aim of my research was to collect participants' views in order to inductively discern the underlying pattern of meaning (Burr, 2015; Lincoln and Guba, 2000; and Schwandt, 2007). Another aim was to explore the coping mechanisms and pedagogical practices that help educators and their students maintain well-being during the prolonged trauma of living in a wartime context. The shared experiences of these educators, as they navigate teaching and caring for their students experiencing prolonged trauma, provided valuable insights. By describing the essence of Ukrainian educators' narratives, this study imparted meaning and insights for other

educators. Collectively, these narratives provided the essence of coping strategies used by educators to maintain their well-being, in their personal lives and in the classroom, on a regular basis.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study was to describe how Ukrainian educators see the effects of prolonged trauma on themselves and their students. To analyze the key coping mechanisms that work best for Ukrainian educators and their students in maintaining well-being during wartime. To analyze how and when Ukrainian educators utilize mindfulness and storytelling, both personally and professionally, to address trauma. To develop a conceptual framework describing stress, trauma, coping mechanisms, suffering and well-being. To identify what coping mechanisms can be used by educators around the globe to deal with their own and students' trauma.

Guiding Research Questions (GRQ)

The overarching question of my dissertation was: What experiences of maintaining well-being (if any) are Ukrainian educators having, despite living through prolonged traumas associated with wartime?

While completing my dissertation, I sought answers for the following three guiding sub-questions:

- GRQ1. What coping strategies do educators use to take care of themselves? How do they describe these strategies?
- GRQ2. What coping strategies do educators use with their students? How do they describe these strategies?
- GRQ3. How do educators perceive mindfulness and storytelling?

Definition of Terms

The following key concepts will be used in this paper: coping, meditation, mindfulness, observation, optimism, resilience, self-acceptance, self-compassion, storytelling, trauma and well-being.

Coping. According to the Medical Dictionary (2023), coping is "the process of contending with life difficulties in an effort to overcome or work through them" (para. 1). Crișan et al. (2023) explained coping as "a repertoire of subconscious thoughts or unconscious adaptive behavior that helps the human subject to manage emotional pressure and reduce or tolerate stress" (p. XX). Coping strategies help individuals deal with and live through the stressful situations in their lives.

Meditation. The American Psychological Association (APA) (2023) defines meditation as a "profound and extended contemplation or reflection in order to achieve focused attention or an otherwise altered state of consciousness and to gain insight into oneself and the world" (para 1). The word meditation came from the Latin *meditatio* which means to concentrate, to reflect, to ponder. Meditation practice can be as simple as concentrating on one's thoughts, feelings, and emotions for several seconds. It is crucial to distinguish the difference between mindfulness and meditation since sometimes these two terms are used interchangeably. Alper (2016) explains that the major difference between them is that mindfulness is a quality and meditation is a practice. Mindfulness is a way of thinking about ourselves and the world around us, whereas meditation is a practice that can help change our states of mind.

Mindfulness. Mindfulness is a proven set of techniques that builds character and is a way to develop the qualities that individuals require in adulthood. The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2022), states that mindfulness practice includes "maintaining a nonjudgmental state of

heightened or complete awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, or experiences on a moment-to-moment basis" (para 2). According to Shapiro and Carlson (2009), the word mindfulness is used to name a mindful practice, as well as a process and a result received after the practice; the mindful awareness. John Kabat-Zinn (2003) explained mindfulness as the awareness of the present moment that arises through paying attention purposefully and non-judgmentally to an experience unfolding moment by moment. Mindfulness is a tool that can help one to control and shape the mind.

Observation. Joe Navarro and Marvin Karlins (2008) defined observation as a "conscious, deliberate behavior — something that takes effort, energy, and concentration to achieve, and constant practice to maintain. Observation is like a muscle. It grows stronger with use and atrophies without use" (p. 9). They explained observation is not just the ability to look, but also to truly see. The authors emphasized that observation can be learned and should be practiced all the time. While observing, one should not rely solely on the sense of sight but engage all senses. Educators who are able to observe, can disconnect themselves from their own emotions and feelings and understand others better.

Optimism. There are several explanations of optimism in psychological literature. Tiger (1979) described optimism as a feeling that future events related to social or material circumstances will happen in their favor. Optimists have personal beliefs that all experiences are generally positive and will be the same in the future. People considered optimistic explain the cause of negative events as temporary rather than permanent (Seligman, 2013, p. 88), specific rather than universal (Seligman, 2013, p. 90), and hopeful rather than hopeless (Seligman, 2013, p. 92).

Resilience. Pemberton (2015) described resilience as the "capacity to remain flexible in our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors when faced by life disruption, or extended periods of pressure so that we emerge from difficulty stronger, wiser, and more able" (p. 2). Resilience involves the ability to successfully adapt and adjust to difficult challenges in life, relying on mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility. The American Psychological Association (2022) defined resilience as a "process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands" (para. 1).

Self-acceptance. Acceptance begins with the self, whereby an individual learns to be comfortable with him/herself and with the immediate environment. From there the scope is expanded into accepting others the way they are (Morgado et al., 2014). From the point of acceptance, we can transition students to the exercises of heartfulness aiming at boosting positive interactions between students and their surroundings.

Self-compassion. Self-compassion requires the same qualities as compassion. Neff (2011) described self-compassion as an ability to stop and recognize one's own suffering to allow oneself to stay healthy while being proactive. The author wrote, "Self-compassion provides an island of calm, a refuge from the stormy seas of endless positive and negative self-judgment" (p. 13). She suggests that well-being is unattainable without the practice of self-compassion.

Storytelling. Each one of us lives in a world that our brain perceives based on our previous experiences and memories. Our mind thinks thousands of thoughts daily. Many of these thoughts often connect and merge into stories that construct our reality. Our stories affect not only us, but our feelings, emotions, and behavior. Therefore, our stories affect our relationships with other people and their realities. Brown (2020) highlighted, "My story matters because I

matter." (p. 160). Our stories are essential for us and those around us. Murphy et al. (2021) conveyed that storytelling is a basic activity in human connections. Telling stories about significant events can help a person to understand them deeply and reconstruct them if needed.

Trauma. Trauma is a personal response to stressful events in one's life when the ability to cope is limited and a person's feeling of safety is absent. What could be a traumatic event for one person might not be for another. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration [SAMHSA] (2022), trauma could have long-term negative effects on one individual and not on another. The effect will depend on the ability of a person to handle trauma, the presence of prior traumatic experiences in their life, and the support system available to a person during the traumatic event.

Well-being. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018), well-being is the desired effect of people's meaningful activity across various sectors of society, indicating that people feel their lives are going well. The well-being of one individual affects the well-being of others around them. Bornstein et al. (2003) explained that well-being is the ability to feel well. Well-being could be achieved by practicing, purposefully, specific techniques that include stress-management, relaxation, being resilient, boosting self-love, and generating the emotions that lead to good feelings.

Expected Contributions to the Field

This study shares educators' insights and experiences of seeking well-being during prolonged trauma. The stakeholders of the study are Ukrainian educators and psychologists, as well as Ukrainian children and their families. Considering the fact that all Ukrainians are affected by the war, the spectrum of trauma that educators, students, and their families are currently experiencing is broad and complex. Although the findings are not generalizable, the experiences

of these Ukrainian educators can illuminate coping strategies that countless educators can find valuable.

The shared global realities of war and violence impact educators and children, disrupting learning and development. On top of that, living in a post-COVID world, most educators worldwide have had to deal with their own pandemic-related trauma (Dixon et al., 2023; Márquez Aponte, 2020). Learning from Ukrainian educators' narratives of how they are able to function and deliver high quality education while experiencing complex trauma can help all educators to understand how to handle trauma, maintain well-being, and help their students to do so as well.

Broadly, this study will contribute to the fields of education and psychology that are supporting our children in crisis. Childhood trauma is a serious issue around the world. In the US between 46% to 60% of children have experienced one or more types of trauma (Mental Health Connection of Tarrant County, n. d.; Morin, 2023; The Trauma-Sensitive, High-Achieving Classroom, 2023). Children who experience trauma experience difficulties at school (Scott, 2020; Terrasi & de Galarce, 2017). Trauma affects a child's socio-emotional development and hinders academic success (Barr, 2018; Gaona, 2022).

Using a pragmatic framework (Creswell & Poth, 2017), this study can inform a broader population living through trauma, helping educators worldwide to transform their own and their students' trauma. The findings can benefit educators, school counselors, and professional development programs in areas connected with socio-emotional learning and trauma-sensitive education. The educational significance may contribute to the broader scholarly understanding of coping strategies for dealing with trauma, maintaining well-being, and improving the learning environment. The results of the research can be offered to educators as an example of how to

maintain well-being and learn coping mechanisms to address both their own trauma and that of their students.

Even though there is research about coping mechanisms used by educators to maintain well-being and studies that confirm benefits of mindfulness or storytelling for educators, there is no research done that explores coping mechanisms, and mindfulness and storytelling as a tool that could be used together by educators in their practices to maintain well-being and deal with trauma. I hope that my findings will impact curriculums for students taught by school counselors and professional development programs for teachers in areas connected with socio-emotional learning and trauma-sensitive education. By completing this qualitative research I improved my skills as a researcher. I am also able to apply my findings in my teaching and educational leadership practices.

Chapter Outline

This section of the chapter summarizes what can be found in each chapter of the dissertation. This study was designed to explore how educators maintain their well-being while experiencing prolonged trauma. This dissertation consists of five chapters.

The current chapter, Chapter One of the dissertation, begins with the researcher's relevant background, positionality, philosophical and theoretical perspectives. It also provides information about the background for the study, statement of the research problem, purpose of the study, guiding questions, definitions of key terms, and significance of the study.

Chapter Two presents the conceptual framework developed for this study and the literature review on topics of stress, trauma, being, surviving, suffering, well-being, and coping mechanisms that help, according to the literature, to deal with stress and trauma.

Chapter Three offers the research methodology. It includes the explanation of qualitative

design and phenomenology methods used in this study; the guiding research questions; and data collection procedures. It also contains a description of the survey and interview participants and their inclusion criteria, the recruitment methods, data analysis and interpretation processes. The description of limitations, delimitations, and the validity of the study included at the end of the chapter.

Chapter Four outlines and organizes the findings from the survey and interviews, focusing on participants' perception of trauma and how it affects them and their students, analysis of coping mechanisms most frequently used by educators for themselves and their students during the wartime, and the meaning of living through the war for Ukrainian educators. This chapter also offers a discussion and analysis of the data that explain how educators understand and use mindfulness and storytelling in both their personal lives and their work with students.

At the end, Chapter Five concludes with a discussion of the findings, their connection to the literature, the study's limitations, and recommendations for future research in the field of Education on topics such as well-being, coping mechanisms to dealing with trauma, mindfulness, and storytelling.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To be, or not to be, that is the question
— William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Living with prolonged trauma affects a person on every level. Depending on individual perception and personality, one's experience or being may be full of joy or struggle. Teaching in wartime impacts an individual's sense of being and living. The following literature review unpacks prolonged trauma, states of existence, and mechanisms for maintaining well-being. These constructs are described in a conceptual framework used to structure this literature review, analysis of the related literature, and a summary.

The literature shared on the following seeks to answer the following questions: When does stress transform into trauma? What is trauma? What are coping mechanisms? What kinds of coping mechanisms do educators need? Why and what kinds of coping mechanisms are needed in the classroom? Mindfulness and storytelling are discussed in the section on coping mechanisms, highlighting how educators can effectively utilize mindfulness and storytelling. The next section introduces the conceptual framework that was developed to see the relationships of these important concepts.

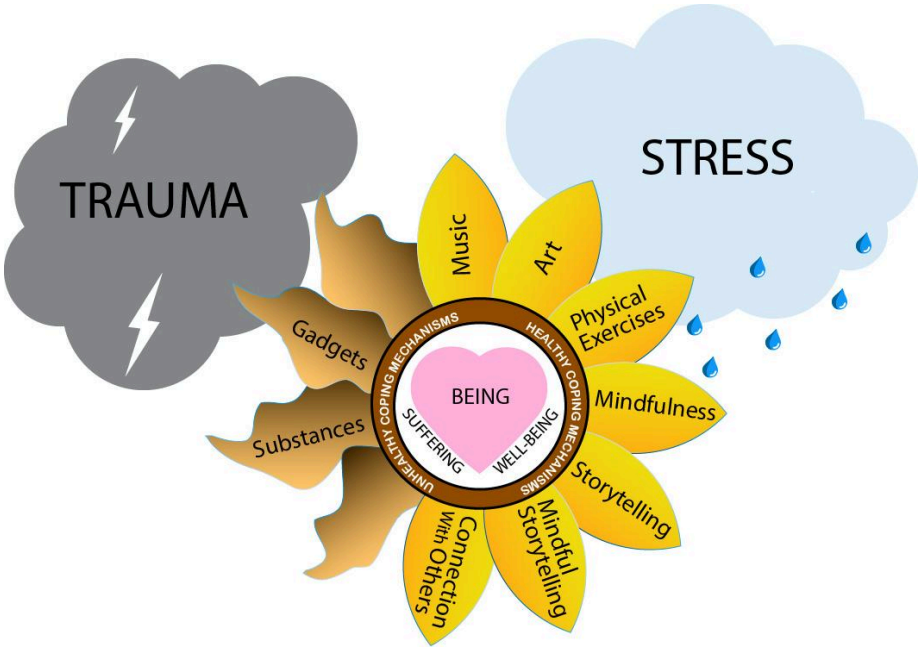
Conceptual Framework

Life, or the state of being, is constantly influenced by various events (Figure 1). The same stressful or traumatic event does not affect different people in the same way (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 2022; McGonigal, 2015; and van der Kolk, 2015).

To structure this literature review, a conceptual framework was developed (Figure 1), and deductive reasoning (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022; and Hamad, 2007) was applied. Deductive analysis of the literature helped me to stay focused on the goals of my research. Based on my research questions, I created broad topical categories that allowed me to concentrate on my questions and organize the findings from the literatrue into those categories.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework.



Note. The heart in the center symbolizes a person's life, or being, that may be experienced as states of suffering or well-being. The balance of stress, trauma, and coping mechanisms determines what state is experienced. The petals on the flower represent various coping mechanisms. The yellow petals indicate healthy coping mechanisms, while the brown ones represent unhealthy ones. Some brown petals have been left empty on purpose to show that certain healthy coping mechanisms can become unhealthy, depending on how they are used by individuals. Raindrops symbolize events that can frequently trigger stress. Lightning in a dark

cloud symbolizes traumatic events.

The overarching question of my dissertation is: What experiences of maintaining well-being (if any) are Ukrainian educators having, despite living through prolonged traumas associated with wartime? Three guiding sub-questions were formulated to help address this overarching question: What coping strategies do educators use to take care of themselves? What coping strategies do educators use with their students? How do educators perceive mindfulness and storytelling?

Johnson-Laird et al. (2015) emphasized the significance of drawing logical conclusions as a cornerstone of rationality when employing deductive reasoning. This chapter employs broad descriptions of topics such as stress, trauma, being, surviving, suffering, well-being, and coping mechanisms to provide educators with a comprehensive understanding of these categories, and to explore how these concepts differ for Ukrainian educators who have endured prolonged traumatic events.

Stress can transform into trauma if healthy coping mechanisms are not developed to manage it (Kanojia, 2023; Linsin, 2016; Mate & Mate, 2022; and van der Kolk, 2015). Lightning symbolizes traumatic events. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2022), traumatic events may or may not be developed into “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)” (APA, 2022, p. 301), depending on the individual’s reaction to those events. According to Boulder Crest Foundation (2024), after trauma, a person can experience a positive psychological transformation “Posttraumatic Growth” (para. 1). So, traumatic events may affect a person positively or negatively.

Each petal of the flower in Figure 1 symbolizes coping mechanisms that can be used during stressful and traumatic times. Vivid, yellow, petals symbolize healthy coping mechanisms

that transform stressful and even traumatic events into well-being or at least into being (Kanojia, 2023; Kariv & Heiman, 2005; and van der Kolk). Faded petals symbolize unhealthy coping mechanisms that often exacerbate stressful or traumatic events and transform being into suffering (Kanojia, 2023; Kariv & Heiman, 2005; and van der Kolk). Some people dwell in a bud-state: unable to understand, find, or use coping mechanisms that work for them (Kariv & Heiman, 2005). Metaphorically speaking, the more "healthy" petals you have in your pocket, the better you feel.

In the end, two opposing forces influence human well-being: one is the stress triggered by events, and the other is our internal reactions and physical actions in response to stress. The coping mechanisms are the choices people make to deal with stress when facing stressful situations (Dalai Lama, 2002; Leon, 2023; McGonigal, 2015; and Seligman, 2013). In the next section, I will discuss the topics of stress and trauma and their presence in everyday life, the lives of educators, and specifically, Ukrainian educators.

Stress

How a person reacts to and deals with life events depends on multiple factors, such as family history, life conditions, and the level of stress and trauma they have already experienced (Bezo & Maggi, 2015; Dixon et al., 2023; Mate & Mate, 2022; Mauss et al., 2007; Shrier, 2024; Stibal, 2009; and van der Kolk, 2015). Experiencing stress is a normal reaction of the brain to life events (Chödrön, 2018; National Institute of Mental Health, n.d.; Sylvester, 1995; and Treleaven, 2018). Tyson & Pongruengphant (2007) explained, "Stress is a characteristic of existence because it is part of being human, built into our organization physically, chemically, physiologically, and psychologically" (p. 353). Stress is a part of life that affects both our physical and mental states.

Under normal circumstances, stress awakens hormones that help to deal with stressful events (Ahmed, 2023; Biegel, 2009; De Calheiros Velozo et al., 2024; Noah, 2024, and Taleb, 2012). The body and mind return to normal as soon as the stressful conditions have passed. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* (American Psychiatric Association, 2022) specified, "Psychological distress following exposure to a traumatic or stressful event is quite variable" (p. 295). On one hand, some people may develop symptoms such as anxiety, fear, anhedonia, dysphoria, externalizing anger, dissociation, or aggression. On the other hand, some may benefit from stress on both physiological and cognitive levels (Jamieson, 2012; and McGonigal, 2015).

According to Keller et al. (2012), post-stress conditions largely depend on a person's feelings and beliefs about stress as a phenomenon. In reference to Tyson & Pongruengphant (2007), "From chemical patterns in our DNA to neural systems underlying learning, memory, and cognition that create self-awareness, humans make assumptions based on the past to predict the future." People who have less stress resistance are more sensitive to stressful conditions than those who are more stress resistant. (Faye, 2018; Guidi et al., 2021; Krkovic et al., 2018; & McGonigal, 2015). Therefore, those who are less stress resistant are more likely to become traumatized. In reference to van der Kolk (2015), "The stress hormones of traumatized people, in contrast, take much longer to return to baseline and spike quickly and disproportionately in response to mildly stressful stimuli" (p. 46). The more frequently a person is exposed to trauma, the less resistant she becomes to stress.

Trauma

Trauma is a personal response to stressful events in life when the ability to cope is limited and a person's sense of safety is diminished (Cole, 2005; and Psychology Today, 2022). Just as

with stress, what may be a traumatic event for one person might not be for another. Traumatic events usually happen unexpectedly. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration [SAMHSA] (2022), trauma may have long-term negative effects on one individual but not on another. The effect depends on an individual's ability to handle trauma, the presence of prior traumatic experiences, and the support system available during the traumatic event. According to Kanojia (2023), trauma is not a malfunction, but an attempt of a brain and body to deal with inferior circumstances, it's an adaptive mechanism that helps people adjust to circumstances and survive in various conditions.

During a traumatic event, if emotions are not processed properly, they leave a trace in the brain and can become triggers that activate the emotional system in similar situations, even if no real threat is present (Brems, 2001; Dispenza, 2012; Ivey, 2012; Nguyen, 2022; Sylvester, 1995). In reference to Roozendaal et al. (2009), trauma disconnects different parts of the brain. It deactivates the analytical, sequential, and linguistic functions of the left hemisphere while activating the right hemisphere, which manages intuitive, emotional, visual, spatial, and tactual processing. Trauma affects human life on multiple levels: emotional, behavioral, cognitive, social, and physical (Kanojia, 2023; and Mate & Mate, 2022). By leaving an imprint on the mind, brain and body, trauma becomes not just a part of a person's past, but it also affects how a "human organism manages to survive in the present" (van der Kolk, 2015, p. 21). Trauma may awaken anger, self-destructive behavior, affect how people communicate with others, and shape their thinking.

Mate and Mate (2022) emphasized, "Trauma is not what happens *to* you but what happens inside you" (p. 20). Trauma affects a person's self-perception and identity. People who have not transformed their trauma tend to be impulsive, vulnerable to repeated mistakes, unable

to take risks, always eager to please others, and unable to moderate relationships (Kanojia, 2023). Some people develop PTSD after experiencing trauma. It is characterized by symptoms such as recurrent dreams or nightmares, disturbed sleep, avoiding activities or places that recall the traumatic event; difficulties in concentration, memory, and feelings of guilt (APA, 2022, p. 301).

In reference to the Boulder Crest Foundation (2024), the lives of people exposed to trauma can be healed by learning to rationally reflect on and respond to present conditions affected by the past, while understanding their emotions and activating the frontal lobe. Mate & Mate (2022) explained, “Facing it (trauma) directly without either denial or overidentification becomes a doorway to health and balance” (p. 35). By approaching trauma with a non-judgmental perspective, individuals can discover new pathways to the future.

As Tedeschi explained to Luna (2019) during the interview, “Experiencing positive transformation after trauma is known as post-traumatic growth.” (0:38). Post-traumatic growth happens when people are able to process their traumas effectivly. During post-traumatic growth, people can change their beliefs about themselves and their lives, and find new purpose, frequently in serving others. Tabita Mpamira-Kaguri acknowledged, “I have heard it said that unless trauma is transformed, it is transferred” (as cited by Sethi, 2021, p. 69). It is important to transform personal trauma before helping others. Therefore, it is essential for educators to understand and transform their own trauma in order to positively impact their students and other stakeholders involved in the educational process.

As Spilt et al. (2011) explained, teacher well-being, even indirectly, significantly influences children’s socio-emotional adjustment and academic performance. Teachers’ trauma impacts learning and development of children (Cole, 2005; Thomas et al., 2019; Venet, 2021). In

reference to Felitti et al. (1998), who described the Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs) study conducted by Kaiser-Permanente from 1995-1997, the adverse effects of neglect, violence, or abuse can result in long-term negative impacts on health and well-being, as well as an increased risk of mortality. Educators and students in the US are experiencing a high level of trauma in a post-COVID-19 world (Dewanti & Wu, 2023; Johnson, 2024; and Márquez Aponte, 2020).

According to Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (2023), "Child trauma occurs more than you think. More than two thirds of children reported at least one traumatic event by age 16." Considering the fact that, in 2021, 50% of adolescents aged 13 to 18 had been diagnosed with a mental disorder (National Institute of Mental Health, 2023), I hypothesize that 50% of middle and high school students in the US were not supported by parents, psychologists, or educators to transform their trauma.

Based on existing research, while working with traumatized children, educators can become aware of trauma symptoms and can create trauma-sensitive, positive environments in school (Cole et al., 2009; Terrasi & de Galarce, 2017). Gaona (2022) explained that educators who have undergone trauma training are better equipped to build strong student-teacher relationships*;* meet student developmental needs in the classroom; make learning more accessible and equitable. Steele and Scott, (2016) emphasized that educators should be aware of students' emotional states because it is a "critical element required for learning" (p. 121). Huse (2022) advised that understanding trauma and stress should be a top priority in U.S. education today to lessen students' maladaptive behavior.

Teachers have to work daily with traumatized students. The shared global realities of the war in Ukraine and familial death during the Covid-19 pandemic, along with other health disparities, impact student learning (Crișan et al., 2023). Ukrainian teachers, who are

experiencing prolonged trauma due to the war, have continued to teach and support their students who experienced trauma on a daily basis (Dufynets, 2024). The general population in Ukraine, including teachers and their students, is experiencing trauma while living through wartime (Belim, 2023; Dlugosz, 2023; Pfeiffer et al., 2024; & Plokhy, 2023).

The factors contributing to acute trauma for Ukrainians include constant air raid alerts, lack of sleep, uncertainty about food and energy sources, financial instability, loss of family members and close friends, loss of all possessions, unclear political actions, attending funerals of acquaintances, witnessing the daily expansion of cemeteries, and the constant danger of being killed (Seleznova et al., 2023). According to Barringer (n. d.), all these factors can be characterized as a different type of loss: permanent loss/death, non-death, anticipatory, and ambigious.

Non-death loss might be hidden and misunderstood and can include loss of buildings, home/town/identity, resources, relationships, culture, security, abilities and capabilites. Anticipating any type of loss is a stressor in itself. Ambiguous loss encompasses uncertainty about what happened to a person, the absence of a person, or a dramatic change in a person's identity or behavior due to a significant experience. Ukrainians have been living and working while experiencing various types of loss for almost three years.

In addition to their acute trauma, Ukrainians experience intergenerational trauma, highlighted by events from the 20th century: slavery through collectivisation in 1929 - 1955, genocides by Holodomors of 1933 (Bezo and Maggi, 2015; Kapystyan, 2022; Sergijchyk, 2021; and Tesliuk, 2023;) and 1948, dekulakization in 1929 - 1930 (Viola, 1986), massacres in Western Ukraine in 1939 - 1941 (The 1941 NKVD Prison Massacres, 2021), and World War II in 1941 - 1945. Every day, all Ukrainians, including educators and their students, endure secondary

trauma as they hear news and stories about individuals who have been tortured or killed on occupied territories or as a result of bombings (Seleznova et al., 2023).

Trauma impacts Ukrainian educators on personal and professional levels (Rolland, 2023; Long, 2023). Ukrainian educators, despite facing prolonged trauma, continue to teach and support others. Van der Kolk (2015) emphasized, “During disasters young children usually take their cues from their parents. As long as their caregivers remain calm and responsive to their needs, they often survive terrible incidents without serious psychological scars” (p. 52). In reference to Bronfenbrenner (1994), a child's “microsystem” (p. 39) includes not only parents, but school, peers, neighbors and other people who communicate with a child in face-to-face settings.

Therefore, during war while being exposed to prolonged trauma, the psychological state of adults who are close to children is crucial for the children’s future psychological state and their ability to be resilient to stress and trauma. Living in a warzone for an extended period is a traumatic event for everyone, including educators, and its impact cannot be overlooked. This is why the ways in which Ukrainian teachers cope with ongoing traumatic events impacts not only themselves and their families but also their students and other stakeholders involved in the educational process. The ability of Ukrainian educators to maintain well-being affects not only their lives, but also the lives of those around them. To truly comprehend well-being, it is essential to first understand the concepts of being, surviving, and suffering.

Being

A person is inherently a human being. The simple phrase “I am” holds true as long as a person's heart is beating and she is breathing. However, the meaning of this phrase varies for each individual. For some, it might be “I am love”, while for others it could be “I am suffering”,

reflecting the diverse factors that shape one's consciousness, feelings, thoughts, and perceptions (Byrne, 2010; Dispenza, 2012; and Stibal, 2009). For millennia people have tried to find an answer to the question, "What is the purpose of human existence?" Many philosophers, psychologists, esoterics, mystics, poets, and writers explained what does it mean to "Be" and experience "Being" (Aurelius, 2017; Hawley, 2001; Holy Bible (1769/2016); Jung and Stein, 1995; Khayyam, 1859/2018; Byrne, 2010; Shakespeare (1994), Tolle, 1999; Rogers, 1990). No matter what thoughts, feelings, or experiences one has, all of them are different forms of being.

Being is a tricky state because, while we are all physically present in it, mentally, most of us are not fully engaged (Dalai Lama, 2002; Hawley, 2001; Patanjali, 2012; and Tolle, 2004). Our brain is shaped by past experiences, which is why we often dwell on the past, remain influenced by it, and worry about the future (Dispenza, 2012; Rogers, 1980; van der Kolk, 2015). According to Tolle (1999), understanding being through the mind alone is impossible. He emphasized that "when your attention is fully and intensely in the Now, Being can be felt" (p. 13). It is difficult to explain in words.

This is why so many composers, such as Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Vivaldi, and many others, expressed it through their music (Downs, 1992; and Goulding, 1995). This is why so many painters, including Cezanne, da Vinci, Dali, Michelangelo, Monet, Picasso, Rembrandt, Van Gogh, and others, have sought to capture it in their art (Beckett, 1999; Finlay, 2023*;* Fitzpatrick, 2006). This is why it has been expressed not only through words but also through art and music. Most masterpieces of literature, art, and music depict the experience of suffering, the resilience to survive against all odds, the human ability to rise above circumstances, and the discovery of meaning in life's simplest moments.

Mate & Mate (2022) emphasized the importance of consciously choosing to find meaning

in every challenge and actively engaging in learning during each moment. Bennet-Goleman (2001) explained that “We each have our unique ways of responding to life’s challenges, and we need to respect our own needs, temperaments, and timing” (p. 359). According to Tolle (1999), allowing the present moment “to be” gives one “inner freedom from external conditions, the state of true inner peace” (p. 35). Tolle states that no matter what happens in a person's life, inner peace can be experienced instead of suffering, even when one is in a state of surviving.

Ukrainian educators and their students have endured a state of surviving for nearly three years (Dufynets, 2024; Plokhy, 2023; Seleznova et al., 2023). Whether they experience more suffering or well-being depends on various factors, much like the impact of stress and trauma. Below, I will describe the concepts of surviving, suffering, and well-being.

Surviving

According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2024), surviving is defined as “continuing to live or exist” (para 1). According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2024), surviving is defined as “still living after another or others have died or died out” (para 1). The literature that describes the state of surviving concentrates on surviving something dramatic. For example: surviving 9/11 (Precin, 2014) surviving concentration camp (Frankl, 2006; and Winchcombe 2015), surviving genocide (Bezo and Maggi, 2015; Kapystyan, 2022; Sergijchyk, 2021; and Tesliuk, 2023), surviving poverty (Mazelis, 2017), surviving shooting in schools (Brown, 2018; Data on Education Reported by Researchers at Wellesley College, 2024; and Stanford, 2024), surviving war (Dufynets, 2024; Plokhy, 2023; and Simic, 2015), and others.

The outcomes of surviving vary among survivors and can even extend to their descendants (Cherepanov, 2015). For example, according to the Data on Education Reported by Researchers at Wellesley College (2024), students who survived school shootings are more likely

to die in their twenties and are more inclined toward suicide and overdoses. Holocaust and Holodomor genocide survivors and their descendants live in survival mode characterized by **"**horror, fear, mistrust, sadness, shame, anger, stress and anxiety, decreased self-worth, stockpiling of food, reverence for food, overemphasis on food and overeating, inability to discard unneeded items, an indifference toward others, social hostility and risky health behaviors" (Bezo and Maggi, 2015, p. 87). They developed adaptive mechanisms that include heightened vigilance, anxiety, overprotectiveness, and an intolerance of weakness in both themselves and others**.** On the one hand, surviving can be transformed into generational trauma; on the other hand, it can be a point of transformation for a person and for her children and grandchildren.

Even when a person's physical actions are constrained by external circumstances, living in a state of being while surviving gives her a choice to direct her thoughts and observe her feelings (Dispenza, 2012; Hawley, 2001; Patanjali, 2012; Tolle, 2004). From that point of awareness a person can also choose further physical actions that will impact her future. Even if external circumstances remain unchanged, by observing, accepting, and adjusting (if needed) her thoughts, a person changes her inner perception of the present moment and her past (Byrne, 2010; van der Kolk, 2015;). From this point of awareness, a person's thoughts and actions determine the possibility to maintain well-being and the level of suffering she will experience in the future, as well as how she will perceive and respond to it.

Simic (2015) argued that survival means to be between life and death, "dealing with the past and moving towards the future" (p. 25). Frankl (2006) explained that he was able to survive the concentration camps by "rising above the situation, above the suffering of the moment" and "observing them as if they were already of the past" (p. 73). Most of the time, while surviving, people experience suffering. The experience of suffering and its intensity is unique to each

individual and can be intentionally altered by the person (Rogers, 1977; Seligman, 2013; and Tillich, 1961). Peterson (2018) believed that it is in person's power to reduce suffering. In the next section, I will explore suffering as an integral part of human life.

Suffering

According to Cambridge dictionary (2024), suffering is "physical or mental pain that a person or animal is feeling" (para. 2). One of the explanations of 'suffer' in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) (n. d.) is "to submit to with pain, distress, or grief" (para. 1). Nietzsche (1887) explained, "Man, the bravest animal and most prone to suffer, does not deny suffering as such: he wills it, he even seeks it out, provided he is shown a meaning for it, a purpose of suffering" (p. 144). Even though there is no agreement among philosophical, religious, and spiritual writers about views on suffering, there is a consensus that suffering is a part of human existence (Denton-Borhaug, 2022; Gibbs & Wolfson, 2002; Patanjali, 2012; Peterson, 2018; Sproul, 2022; Tolle, 2020; and Tyson & Pongruengphant, 2007). From birth and throughout the course of life, a person experiences physical and psychological pain.

Most religions hold the belief that suffering can be beneficial for a person. Even if we know and believe that one can benefit and find pleasure in suffering, it is not helpful to mention this to someone currently experiencing physical pain or loss (Mills, 2022; and Sproul, 2022). Myths and stories about gods and heroes carol suffering as a source of empowerment (Guimarães Guerra & Nicdao 2019). These stories foster the belief that suffering can help individuals overcome prearranged physical and psychological limits and empower them. While discussing the philosophy of yoga, Patanjali (2012) stated, "If someone suffers, he or she is blessed, because by that suffering some impurities are purged out" (p. 138). Christians believe that suffering is

real and “never an exercise in futility” (Sproul, 2022, 20:44). The Christian faith has its roots in suffering, with the belief that through experiencing suffering and pain, one can achieve salvation.

During the interview *Speaking of Psychology: Why We Choose to Suffer*, Paul Bloom — professor of psychology at the University of Toronto and Brooks and Suzanne Ragen Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Yale University — drew Kim I. Mills’ (2022) attention to the connection between suffering and morality in our society. (Mills is the senior director of strategic external communications and public affairs for the American Psychological Association.) There is a belief that to do good, one should suffer, for example, by running a fundraiser marathon. People often fail to perceive someone as altruistic or good if that person appears to prioritize their own benefit.

Bloom also shared that “there are many ways in which suffering can give us pleasure” (Mills, 2022, 05:02) and people frequently look for it when eating spicy food or riding roller coasters as an example. So, on the one hand people plan and enjoy suffering, while on the other, they strive to minimize unplanned suffering. Tyson, & Pongruengphant (2007) explained that we can decrease suffering and pain while connecting to the reality of life and correcting our attitudes, beliefs, and feelings. Buddhists believe that a person can intentionally improve the reality of the present by manipulating attention and awareness of the past.

The opposite to suffering is well-being. There is a consensus in the literature that suffering can be alleviated by finding meaning, looking toward the future, and serving others, thereby helping individuals rise above their suffering. (Peterson, 2018; Rogers, 1980; Seligman, 2013; Sharma, 1997; and van der Kolk, 2015). Frankl (2006), emphasized, “Once an individual’s search for a meaning is successful, it not only renders him happy but also gives him the capability to cope with suffering” (p. 139). Literature highlights the importance of bringing

happiness to others while accepting one's own pain and the pain of others. Patanjali (2012) emphasized, "We never lose by accepting pain. The more the pain, the more the gain - and no pain, no gain. We should never run from it" (p. 138).

Hay (2004) mentioned that many good teachers come from "a place of much pain and suffering, and they're worked through the layers to reach the place where they can now help others to become free" (p. 43). She explained that a person must continually release suffering, emphasizing that it is an ongoing, lifelong process. Frankl (2006) ensured, "Even the helpless victim of a hopeless situation, facing a fate he cannot change, may rise above himself, may grow beyond himself, and by so doing change himself. He may turn a personal tragedy into a triumph" (p. 146). The ability to improve suffering makes a person optimistic and resilient (Bell, 2014; Brown, 2020; and Seligman, 2013). Finding meaning in everyday existence guides a person toward well-being. In the next section, I will define and explore the concept of well-being.

Well-being

The concept of well-being varies for each individual and even across different groups of people (Belim, 2023; Hawley, 2001; and Sproul, 2022). Commonly, well-being is used interchangeably with *happiness* (Litvak, 2003; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018; and Mate & Mate, 2022). Beth Cabrera (2015) emphasized that what happens internally has a deeper impact on our well-being than what occurs externally. According to Martin Seligman (2013), understanding well-being is only possible by identifying what virtues and strengths a person needs to feel happy. Seligman explained that most "venerable traditions disagree on the details, but all of these codes include six core virtues: wisdom and knowledge, courage, love and humanity, justice, temperance, spirituality and transcendence" (p. 11). The author suggests that each person is characterized by possessing not all, but some "*signature strength"* (p. 13) and her well-being

can be maintained by utilizing and cultivating her signature strengths.

There are also cosmopolitan perspectives on well-being, rooted in Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation (2013), which correlates well-being with the satisfaction of physiological needs, safety needs, the need for love and belonging, esteem needs, and self-actualization (Figure 2). To feel well, people need food and water; feel safe physically and financially; connection with others and feeling loved; a sense of worthiness, strength and usefulness in the world; and the opportunity to engage in "what he is fitted for" (p. 7).

Figure 2

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Note. Taken from the Adobe Stock. (2024). *Maslow's Pyramid.* https://stock.adobe.com/search?k=maslow+pyramid+&search_type=usertyped

Even if the bottom two levels of a person's pyramid are not fully satisfied or stable, she can still maintain well-being by fulfilling the top three levels. For example, Ukrainians living in their own country during the war (Plokhy, 2023) cannot fully control the first and second stages of the pyramid due to ongoing challenges such as daily shellings, electricity outages, insomnia, and inflation. However, they can still (and should) practice kindness and compassion toward others, show respect, cultivate confidence, as well as do what is important for them (Frankl, 2006; Seleznova, 2023; and van der Kolk, 2015). Often people become self-actualized during or

after experiencing a lack of physiological and safety needs (Boulder Crest Foundation, 2024), depending on how they deal with the situation.

Furthermore, the understanding of well-being may be influenced by an individual's affiliation with a certain nation, profession, and/or religion. For example, yogis believe that a person's well-being cannot be maintained without following the 10 principles of *yama* and *niyama.* Yamas are rules that explain the person's connection with the outside world. Niyamas are rules that should be applied to oneself. Yamas include principles such as non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, the right use of energy, and non-greed. Niyamas encompass principles such as cleanliness, contentment, discipline, connection with oneself through continuous learning, and connection with higher consciousness (Patanjali, 2012).

On the other hand, the Ten Commandments given to Moses by God, as described in the Bible, partially echo the principles of yoga. They are: having one God; not creating idols; not using God's name in vain; keeping one day of the week for connection with God; honoring parents; not killing; maintaining fidelity; not stealing; not lying; and refraining from jealousy (Holy Bible: Kings James Version, 2016). Belonging to a specific group and following defined principles can provide individuals with a structured framework for maintaining their well-being.

Even the language one uses can influence her perception of well-being. For example, if one speaks English, well-being will mean 'to exist in a satisfactory manner' (Etymonline, 2024). If one speaks Ukrainian, the etymology of the word добробут [dobrobut*,* well-being] is understood as existence with something that must be chosen, acquired, and potentially defended later (Ukrainets', 2017). Personal beliefs and values that determine well-being can change following emotional (positive or negative), traumatic, or stressful experiences, as well as with age (Boulder Crest Foundation, 2024; and Stibal 2009). For example, the perception of

well-being for a person with a child differs from that of someone without children. For parents, their child's well-being, especially at a young age, is commonly a part of their own. Rogers (1980) explained, "The only reality you can possibly know is the world as *you* perceive and experience it at this moment" (p. 102). What works for one person to maintain well-being might not work for another.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2022) classifies well-being into the following categories: "physical well-being, economic well-being, social well-being, development and activity, emotional well-being, psychological well-being, life satisfaction, domain specific satisfactions, and engaging activities and work" (para 3). Well-being is a complex term and should be examined holistically. If a person feels well physically, but is not fully satisfied at work, her well-being will not be fulfilled.

In reference to Partif (1984) well-being can be described from the point of three different theories: Hedonistic, Desire-Fulfillment, and Objective List. "Hedonistic Theories, what would be best for someone is what would make his life happiest. On Desire-Fulfillment Theories, what would be best for someone is what, throughout his life, would best fulfill his desires. On Objective List Theories, certain things are good or bad for us, whether or not we want to have the good things, or to avoid the bad things" (p. 493). According to Hedonism, a person's well-being can be maintained by experiencing more positive and pleasurable moments while minimizing negative ones. With Desire-Fulfillment theory, a person can maintain well-being by satisfying her desires. With regard to Objective theory, well-being depends on things we possess without consciously desiring them, such as health, friendship, knowledge, and success.

Referring to Graham et al. (2018) a person having what she thinks she needs or desires will not always improve her well-being. Understanding what is truly needed and prioritizing that

need can be a complex task. Experiencing pleasures in the moment and achieving dreams do not always lead to greater happiness and can, at times, even result in future suffering. This is why coping mechanisms that provide only fleeting moments of "happiness" before the need for more arises do not effectively contribute to maintaining well-being (Mate & Mate, 2022).

Based on Maslow (2013) "What man can be, he must be" (p. 3). Understanding "what" one can and should be does not come overnight. Therefore, one should be careful about the type of coping she uses in the present to maintain well-being, as in her present, she creates her future (Dispenza, 2012). A person's well-being depends on how she deals with stress, transforms trauma, understands being, proceeds while surviving, and values suffering.

In reference to the existentialist viewpoint, "[W]e act on the world while it simultaneously acts on us" (Ivey, 2012, p. 366). Even though it is challenging for Ukrainian educators to maintain well-being while enduring prolonged traumatic experiences, employing certain coping mechanisms can help them achieve this, even during such difficult times (Rizzi et al., 2023; van der Kolk).

They can still experience *being in the world* because the state of well-being can only be achieved after experiencing the state of being (May, 1969; Rogers, 1980; and Tolle, 2004). While being in the world, they can make decisions that are within their locus of control that guide them toward a fulfilling and meaningful life. Whether an event is experienced as stress or develops into PTSD depends on quality, quantity, and frequency of coping mechanisms used by individuals in everyday life (Grenville-Cleave, 2016; Kanojia, 2023; Jarvie, 2019; Seligman, 2013; and van der Kolk, 2015). Mate & Mate (2022) explained,

None of us need be perfect, nor exercise saintly compassion, nor reach any emotional or

> spiritual benchmark before we can say we're on the healing path. All we need is readiness to participate in whatever process wants to unfold within us so that healing can happens naturally. Anyone, no matter their history, can begin to hear wholeness beckoning, whether in a shout or whisper, and resolve to move in its direction. With the heart as a guide and the mind as a willing and curious partner, we follow whatever path most resonates with that call (p. 373).

The well-being of one individual affects the well-being of other people around them (Ivey, 2012; and Sharma, 1997). Therefore, educators should pay attention to how they are maintaining their well-being not only for their own benefit but also to help foster well-being in their students. Suttles (2024) emphasized, "By prioritizing their well-being, teachers can enhance their resilience and effectiveness in the classroom, leading to better student outcomes" (p. 66).

During wartime, children are the ones most profoundly affected by its consequences (Goto et al., 2022; Seleznova et al., 2023). Educators can teach their students how to cope with war's traumatic events. As my friend Hannah Surkova explained to me, "children learn from their teachers like litmus paper" (personal communication, February 13, 2024). Stibal (2009) emphasized, "It is our trusted responsibility as parents, grandparents, teachers, caregivers and health practitioners to nurture these magnificent and tender spirits (children) with love and understanding" (p. 256). Teachers should serve as role models and teach students as many coping mechanisms as possible.

Yogananda (2007) emphasized, "Infinite happiness and peace are always at hand, just behind the screen of man's ignorance" (p. 109). When effective coping mechanisms are routinely applied, a person experiences a sense of being or even well-being, rather than merely suffering while surviving. Tedeschi explained to Luna (2019) that people, who are close to death or have

escaped from death, think differently about life and "see it as more precious" (26:22). In the following section, I will analyze the literature that explores various coping mechanisms available to educators for managing stressful and traumatic events on both personal and professional levels.

Coping Mechanisms

Ability to cope in constructive and effective ways can protect people from psychological threat and damage in stressful situations (Ivey et al., 2012; and van der Kolk, 2015). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) explained coping as various cognitive and behavioral attempts to deal with internal or external needs. Higgins and Endler (1995), classified coping strategies into the following categories: task-oriented, emotion-oriented, and avoidance-oriented coping. Task-oriented coping is frequently referred to as a problem-focused strategy.

In reference to Gall et al. (2005), problem solving involves understanding a problem and taking direct action to address it while keeping in mind the direction for future actions. According to Matlin (1990), emotion-oriented mechanisms focus on altering emotional responses to stressors, aiming to view the problem from a perspective that reduces negative emotions and alleviates stress. These two coping mechanisms are regarded as the most socially accepted in contemporary society and proactive in their nature. They include methods aimed at changing stressful conditions. Lambert et al. (2004) explained that avoidance-oriented coping includes strategies such as avoiding the situation, losing hope, or denying its existence. While using avoidance-oriented coping, a person does not attempt to change the situation. This approach has minimal value as a stress management technique.

Some coping mechanisms can be both task-oriented and emotion-oriented. For example, painting allows a person to create a piece of art while also providing an outlet for releasing her

emotions. Kanojia (2023) cautioned that people who experienced trauma and have a diminished sense of autonomy often rely on emotion-oriented coping to change themselves internally. This tendency arises because from previous experiences they have learned that they cannot associate actions with control over external circumstances. Sometimes, they alter their emotions using substances. In this case, emotion-oriented coping transforms into avoidance-oriented coping. Kanojia recommended the use of problem-oriented strategies as the most effective, as they focus on addressing problems at multiple levels and encourage people to look forward to the future.

Educators, whose profession involves working with students and other stakeholders, are often exposed to stressful and traumatic feelings related to events occurring in their students' lives (Brown, 2018; and Cole, 2005). Educators frequently experience secondary traumatic stress that can be characterized as burnout, compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and compassion satisfactions (National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environment, n. d.). Which type of stress will be the most prevalent in educators' lives depends on how they cope with it (Leon, 2023; Nwoko, 2024; and Suttles, 2024).

Nwoko et al. (2024) emphasized that to maintain well-being and teaching quality, educators need to know effective coping strategies that work for them. The author emphasized that teachers' well-being and improved coping skills can lead to a more systematic delivery of knowledge, enhanced development skills, and better learning outcomes. Educators who effectively cope with stress are able "to create environments in which children and adults can feel safe and where they can thrive" (van der Kolk, 2015, p. 38).

Dewey (1944) explained that the communication of habits, feelings, actions, and thoughts is passed from adults to children. He emphasized, "Without this communication of ideas, hopes, expectations, standards, opinions, from those members of society who are passing out of the

group life to those who are coming into it, social life could not survive" (p. 3). Educators' well-being affects not only individual teachers and their students, but society at large.

Van der Kolk (2015) believed that humanity can create an environment where both children and adults can feel safe and thrive. The author emphasized, "People can learn to control and change their behavior, but only if they feel safe enough to experiment with new solutions" (p. 351). Students need a safe environment to be successful and happy. Raviv (2010) stated that coping-based intervention can transform children who have experienced trauma or been diagnosed with a psychological disorder. Teaching children various coping strategies can help them navigate new and complex environments in the future.

On the other hand, Sergin et al. (2013) highlighted that a lack of exposure to healthy coping mechanisms or repeated exposure to unmanageable stress can lead a child to develop a habit of using avoidance-oriented coping mechanisms. According to Seiffge-Krenke (2000), dependence on avoidance cannot help children effectively cope with life circumstances and puts them at risk for mental health problems as they grow older.

Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994) emphasized that a child needs to have a connection with at least one adult who can understand and support her. For some children, this adult is one of her educators. In reference to Wadsworth (2015), children develop their coping skills in infancy, while learning to co-regulate with a caregiver. During the first year, children learn how to cope with stress and interact with the outside world to survive. Strategies learned during the first year unfold throughout the first twenty years of life and beyond, shaping the types of coping mechanisms a person adopts.

It is vital to develop a "healthy repertoire" (para. 3) of coping skills during early and teen-age years while experiencing mild and moderate stress. Some children spend more of their

awake time with educator(s) than with their caregivers. By utilizing various coping mechanisms, educators should be able to set aside and disconnect from their negative emotions, their trauma, allowing them to be fully present for the students.

Considering all Ukrainian children living during wartime, it is clear that knowing healthy coping strategies is vital for them to thrive in the future. According to Kostruba & Kostruba (2024) and Plokhy (2023), a lot of Ukrainians have a low level of mental health stability and can be diagnosed with depression, anxiety, and low social interaction. Ukrainian educators who recognize the impact of trauma on their psychological health and well-being of their students, continually learn new healthy coping mechanisms to support themselves and others (First Aid of The Soul, 2022; Ty Yak?, 2024; and VeLa, 2024).

In the next section I will explain the benefits of mindfulness, meditation, connection with oneself and others, reading and writing as storytelling, creativity (art and music), and physical movement as coping mechanisms suitable for educators and their students to support them during and after traumatic times. These coping strategies are beneficial to be introduced to any students because they can help them build resilience for the future.

Mindfulness

According to research, practicing mindfulness can benefit educators and their students in myriad ways (Dietrich et al., 2017; Schonert-Reichl and Roeser, 2016; and Felver et al., 2020). Mindfulness practice teaches practitioners to be aware of and enjoy the present moment. Van der Kolk (2014) deliniated, “Mindfulness increases activation of the medial prefrontal cortex and decreases activation of structures like the amygdala that trigger our emotional responses. This increases our control over the emotional brain” (p. 286). Practicing mindfulness helps manage emotions, improve concentration, and effectively use problem-solving coping mechanisms.

Currently, the topic of mindfulness is gaining popularity in the field of education (Brouillette, 2021; Desai, 2015; Fraser, 2017; Picard, 2018; Poonam, 2015; and Watkinson et al.. 2021). The term “mindfulness” is currently widely overused and sometimes misinterpreted, as well as overcomplicated. Van Dam et al. (2017) explained, “Misinformation and poor methodology associated with past studies of mindfulness may lead public consumers to be harmed, misled, and disappointed” (p. 36). While mindfulness includes a proven set of techniques, it is not a “magic pill” and does not work instantly.

Brene Brown (2020) explained, “We cannot give our children what we don’t have” (p. xxv). Teaching students mindfulness techniques without practicing them oneself lacks authenticity. Educators aiming to teach mindfulness to their students have to become mindful people themselves. An old idiom says: “Practice what you preach”. There is no better way to teach than by personal example.

Educators who participated in mindfulness programs became more attentive and were thus able to bring their focus where and when they wanted (Mindful School, 2016). Practicing mindfulness can enhance educators' overall well-being (Honmore, 2023). The following sources demonstrate mindfulness improving emotional (Meditation Lessons, 2023b; Mindful School, 2016), physical (Davis, 2019; Harvard Health, 2023; Meditation Lessons, 2023a), social (Ciarrochi and Kashdan, 2013), workplace (Pollock et al., 2020), and societal well-being (Davis, 2019). Mindfulness affects well-being on physical, social, workplace, and societal levels.

Referring to Nwoko et al. (2024), teachers and educational leaders should practice mindfulness themselves in order to teach it to others. Balentine (2023) emphasized that if educators want to teach children mindfulness, they have to become role models for them, because human beings take cues from people around them, especially those who are in charge.

Pedagogues should be aware that children become more mindful by observing adults who practice mindfulness.

One of the most accessible and simplest mindfulness techniques is purposefully paying attention and adjusting the rhythm of one's breathing (Vo, 2014). Breathing can enhance yoga, meditation, and mindfulness practices (Groves & Wei, 2017; Chopra, 2020). Breathing exercises can be performed with ease, at any time, and quickly impact practitioners on physical and psychological levels. Van der Kolk (2015) and Russo et al. (2017) stated that breathing exercises allow a person to regulate her heart rate, blood pressure, balance her nervous system, and activate her immune system. Respiration practices can amplify mood, improve sleep, and reduce stress (Balban et al, 2023; Everly and Lating, 2019; Huberman, 2021; & Jerath et al., 2019).

Teaching students to be aware of and control their breathing can help them stay more attentive during classes and perform better on tests. It can help to improve students' academic performance and the general well-being of students and educators (Brouillette, 2021; Desai, 2015; Schonert-Reichl & Roeser, 2016; and Tan, 2022). Practicing mindfulness can help students and educators to build acceptance and resilience.

There are numerous coping mechanisms that work for different people, but they are never fully effective unless practiced mindfully. Mindfulness is a part of meditation (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, 2024). Practicing meditation on a regular basis helps to become mindful in everyday life. It gives the practitioner the opportunity to concentrate and understand themselves: their thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

Meditation

Mindfulness techniques help us to deal with stress and anxiety. Meditation teaches us to observe thoughts and emotions. Chopra (2020) stated that meditation provides an opportunity to

explore and realign the benefits of this practice on physical, mental, relational, emotional, and spiritual levels. After learning how to observe thoughts and emotions, a practitioner progresses to learning how to control them (Meditation Lessons, 2023a). Practicing meditation improves self-awareness and self-management. Even though we cannot control what is happening in the outside world, we can control ourselves and our emotions by practicing meditation. Practicing meditation and cultivating mindfulness is a pathway to a self-awareness and deeper connection with oneself (Patanjali 2012).

Connection with Oneself

Referring to Matthew 22:36-40, one should love close ones as thyself (Holy bible: Kings James version, 2016). The important part of this statement is the understanding that one must first love oneself in order to love and connect with others. According to Orem (2001), everyone has an innate desire and the ability to care for themselves. The first and most important coping mechanism that can be practiced by educators is establishing a true and real connection with oneself (Hay, 2004; Patanjali, 2012; Rogers, 1980; Seligman, 2013). When the connection is there, a person can discern which actions benefit her in the present and future and which ones cause harm. This connection serves as the foundation of self-care, which is built upon the coping mechanisms a person uses to manage stress and trauma in everyday life.

One may trick everyone around her, but the only person she truly deceives is herself, because deep down, in her heart, she always knows the truth (Dispenza, 2012). Sher (1996) noted that nothing can make a person happy except doing what she loves. She explained,“Somewhere inside yourself you know what you love” (p. 1). Personal growth and self-understanding can create new opportunities through the analysis of one’s life experiences. An individual must acknowledge and take responsibility for the myriad of choices available to

her and later decide to intentionally select those that will lead to positive life changes (Buber, 1970; and Rogers, 1980).

In reference to Buber (1970), individuals can intentionally seek meaningful and positive connections with others while mending relationships with oneself. He emphasized the importance of perceiving others as people rather than merely as objects. As Krishna explained to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita, "The ideal, Arjuna, is to be intensely active and at the same time have no selfish motives, no thoughts of personal gain or loss. Duty uncontaminated by desire leads to inner peacefulness and increased effectiveness." (Hawley, 2001, p. 21). This highlights the value of engaging deeply while remaining unattached.

Connection With Others

Brene Brown (2020) emphasized, "We are worthy of love and belonging *now.* Right this minute. As is" (p. 33). Love and belonging to others are our basic needs. As social mammals, humans thrive and survive through harmonious collaboration and mutual coordination (Salzgeber, 2019; Sylvester, 1995; and Van der Kolk, 2015). People cannot survive without social support that may include communication, emotional support, different types of aid, rationalization or validation of one's perceptions and actions (Tyson & Pongruengphant, 2007). Thinking about how to help others helps individuals reduce their stress levels (Peterson, 2021). In reference to Poulin et al. (2013) study, helping family, neighbors, and others in the community promotes longivity and fosters resilience.

Beth Cabrera (2015) explained that connection and helping others begin with small and simple acts of kindness. Personal prosperity, success, and happiness are impossible without serving others (Covey, 2020; and Sharma, 1997). Van der Kolk (2015) argued that people possess the ability to heal one another, and that building relationships within the community is essential

for maintaining well-being. Frankl (2006) emphasized, “The more one forgets himself — by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love — the more human he is and the more actualizes himself” (p. 111). Devoting oneself to the education of others is a deeply responsible desision.

Educators are those who have to teach, help, heal, and serve others. Therefore, a sense of belonging and connection with others for social and peer support is essential to the profession (Leon, 2023; Nwoko et al., 2024; and Suttles, 2024). A positive work environment can reduce stress for pedagogues. Educators need time and place to seek advice, vent, communicate, and receive emotional support from other colleagues. The culture where educators share goals, values, and can trust one another is vital for educators’ well-being and therefore for their students. Teachers’ relationships with individual children, sense of companionship and belonging, influence classroom and school climate (Martin and Dowson, 2009; and Split, et al. 2011).

During wartime, a supportive and positive family, organizational, and community environment becomes even more vital (Kostruba & Kostruba, 2024). Higher indicators of well-being during highly stressful and traumatic times include interactions with friends, family, and members of organization or community; various forms of social support; and a sense of belonging. According to Crisan (2023), the use of emotional social support, where individuals feel sympathy and understanding, proved to be a highly effective coping mechanism among the Romanian population while supporting Ukrainians.

An essential aspect of serving others is the ability to ask for help when needed (Adames et al., 2023). Newton’s Third Law states, “for every action (force) in nature there is an equal and opposite reaction” (National Astronauts and Space Administration, 2024, para 2). Everything

should be in balance, and each exercise requires a counter exercise to be beneficial (Harris, 2021; Abke, 2024). For most people, asking for help is an act of courage and requires self-awareness and trust that their request will be met with grace and decency (Eusden, 2020).) Understanding when, how, and who to ask for help can be a crucial coping mechanism for surviving in contemporary society (Verburgh, 2024). Relationships among people are impossible without the ability to both serve and seek support when needed.

Connection with others as a coping mechanism often develops alongside other coping mechanisms, such as physical activities, art, music, reading and writing. Gardner (1993) also explained that musical-rhythmic, verbal-linguistic, and interpersonal intelligence cannot exist without social cooperation. Developing social connections as a coping mechanism requires the use of other coping strategies, just as those strategies depend on social connections for their development. Van der Kolk (2015) noticed, “Athletics, playing music, dancing, and theatrical performances all promote agency and community” (p. 357). All forms of arts, music, physical activities, reading and writing serve as a tool for social connections among people. Engaging in different forms of art requires and develops creativity.

Creativity

Creativity is an innate human need. Humanity would not exist without the capacity for creativity. Sousa (2012) highlighted, “We have never discovered a culture on this planet — past or present — that doesn't have music, art, and dance” p. 217. Creativity is a vital form of group survival that distinguishes one ethnic group from another.

Brown (2020) highlighted, “Creativity, which is the expression of our originality, helps us stay mindful that what we bring to the world is completely original and cannot be compared” (p. 125). According to Kaufman & Gregoire (2015), creativity engages interaction of various

cognitive systems. It stimulates conscious and unconscious thinking that helps connect generations, stimulates personal agency, and inspires physical actions. Davis and Magee (2020) observed that creativity provides an opportunity to manage stress, improve health, and maintain well-being not only at an individual level but also within families and communities. The use of creativity in the form of reading and writing, art, music, and movement connects people and enhances social relationships. From the moment people learned to communicate, they began using storytelling.

Storytelling

People connect with and understand those around them by listening to their stories (Steele & Scott, 2016). By sharing their stories, individuals can transform their lives. Storytelling can help people find meaning in the present, understand the bigger picture of their lives, overcome deconstructive thoughts and beliefs, and envision a happier future (Storytelling With Impact, n.d.). As stated by Peterson (2017), storytelling is most important for sense and meaning-making. Our brain analyzes our truths and beliefs through our stories and the stories of others. In reference to Kegan (2009), by retelling stories, analyzing experiences, and understanding identities, individuals can intentionally transform themselves and others through an “epistemological transformation" (p. 43), gaining insight into how they know what they know.

Every person lives and makes meaning of their lives in their own unique way (Dispenza, 2012). In reference to Carl Rogers (1980), we perceive the world through our thoughts that transform into beliefs and assumptions. “We use a language that allows us not to feel responsible for what we’re experiencing or for what we are doing” (D’Ansembourg, 2007, p. 19). Barringer (2024) noted that personal adaptation and growth depend on an individual’s attachment to their story.

According to Jickling (2009), educators intuitively know that learning is a magnificent and intricate human experience that touches multiple layers of the learner. Storytelling impacts educators and their students on rational, emotional, and sensory levels. Teachers communicate verbal and non-verbal messages to students that, depending on the students' life circumstances, shape them to acquire a certain character. Educators' storytelling and actions leave imprints on students' minds and spirits. It affects not only their students, but people around them (Kegan & Lahey, 2001). Teaching cannot happen without storytelling. Educators communicate their stories to their students. Sometimes pedagogues are unaware how their stories impact their students.

Practicing storytelling as a therapeutic technique helps educators realize that they can change their stories, and by doing so, they can change their thoughts, and by transforming their thoughts, they can change their lives (Byrne, 2010; Stibal, 2009). A true, honest, and candid story of one person can change the storytelling of their family, friends, coworkers and acquaintances. The storytelling of small groups of people can influence the storytelling of larger groups and ultimately impact society as a whole (Peterson, 2017; Rutledge, 2011; and Storytelling With Impact, n.d.). Pedagogues who practice storytelling can find meaning in the circumstances they experience. They can shape their stories to be optimistic. Their attitudes and stories affect not only themselves but all stakeholders. Teachers who understand their own storytelling can guide students in understanding theirs.

Storytelling is an effective teaching strategy that can be used by teachers and educational leaders to improve school climate and culture by creating needed changes to improve the learning process, and the well-being of educators and students. The use of storytelling can support creativity and happiness among all stakeholders in the educational process while also helping to address and manage negative emotions (Bonds, 2016; Damico, 2019; Day, 2018;

Kromka & Goodboy, 2019; Meyer & Meyer, 2021; Murphy et al., 2021; Nguen et al. 2016; Parmenter, 2013; Reeder, 2009; Scott, 2020; Steele & Scoot, 2016; and Strekalova-Hughes & Wang, 2019). To enhance and gain a deeper understanding of their own storytelling, educators and students can utilize reading as an effective coping mechanism.

Reading

Reading helps people to cope with stress, trauma and loneliness. It serves as a mechanism for normalizing and understanding feelings and emotions. It shows the reader what human life is like from different perspectives. Diodorus Siculus (56–36 BC) referred to the library as “the healing house of the soul” (Uppsala Universitet, 2024, para. 5). Reading can help to redefine the meaning of life and transform a person’s existence (Davis & Magee, 2020). In reference to Warwick (2016), literature helps find answers to the mental health questions that everyone faces. Crosse (1928) described literature as “the great medium of thought transference”, where the humanities preserve “the gems of intellect”(p. 925). The author emphasized that literature reflects all known emotions: hope, despair, sorrow, joy, and others.

Reading nurtures and enriches the personal mind and inner core. Reading stimulates neuron connections, enhances brain activity, and extends lifespan (Bavishi et al., 2016; Sousa, 2012). It can heal, teach, and inspire. According to Davis & Magee (2020) “Humans need time and attention for the sake of an inner life, and for types of thoughts, we‘ll argue, that can only be experienced through complex literature” (p. 6). Reading can be used as a therapeutic technique in education, psychology, and psychiatry.

Samuel Crothers (1916) discussed a technique of prescribing books to patients as a means of helping them understand and address their problems. Crothers labeled this technique "bibliotherapy" (p. 291). Merriam-Webster dictionary (n.d.) defines bibliotherapy as “the use of reading materials for help to solve personal problems or for psychiatric therapy” (para 1).

McEncroe (2007) emphasized that literature needs to be carefully selected to meet an individual's needs and to target particular problems to be theraputic. While being emotionally engaged in a character's struggle, individuals can gain insight into their own situations and discover answers to their questions. By analyzing the struggles of characters living in similar conditions, readers can become the observer rather than the subject of their own circumstances.

In reference to Aiex (1993), there are nine reasons for educators to use bibliotherapy with students. They include: to help a person realize they are not the first to have such a problem; to demonstrate that there are many ways to solve a problem; to give an individual opportunity to discuss the problem more openly; to encourage constructive thinking about the problem; to mitigate negative emotions; to help develop personal self-concept; to promote sincere self-analysis; to enable individuals to discover interests beyond themselves; and to deepen their understanding of human motivations and conduct. Reading enables individuals to observe their own problems by contemplating the stories of others. Writing allows individuals to articulate their personal problems, facilitating a deeper understanding of them.

Writing

Van der Kolk (2015) emphasized that writing helps an individual to better understand her own experiences, clarify what she knows, and find a sense of meaning. He explained, “The object of writing is to write to yourself, to let yourself know what you have been trying to avoid” (p. 245). Writing allows a person to slow down her thinking and gain a clearer understanding of what is actually happening in her life (Noah, 2024). Writing allows individuals to process and organize traumatic memories, fostering self-acceptance, deeper self-awareness, and greater empathy for others (Harber & Pennebaker, 1992; & Smith et al., 2023). In reference to Klein & Boals (2001), expressive writing improves the range of working memory and therefore improves cognitive processing. According to Kanojia (2023), writing can substitute action. When an

individual describes her problems it makes a difference. Articulating a difficult situation triggers integration. Integration promotes flow states that contribute to personal imporvement.

In reference to Baikie & Wilhelm (2005), "Writing about traumatic, stressful or emotional events has been found to result in improvements in both physical and psychological health, in non-clinical and clinical populations" (p. 338). Writing about trauma can trigger negative emotions in the moment, but it provides invaluable insight and can significantly enhance personal well-being over time.

Although writing and storytelling can be highly effective therapeutic techniques for many, they do not work for everyone. Van der Kolk (2015) emphasized, "Traumatic events are almost impossible to put into words" (p. 233). When a person finds it difficult to describe past experiences or finds it easier to express them through drawing, art becomes an effective coping mechanism (Sousa, 2012). In the following section, I will explore art as a coping mechanism in greater detail.

Art

According to Sheposh (2024), "*Art* is the visual expression of human imagination in an attempt to create an object that carries an aesthetic or emotional impact" (para 1). Visual arts includes drawing, painting, sculpture, architecture, printmaking, photography, and filmmaking. Art helps promote **"**creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, communication, self-direction, initiative, and collaboration" (Sousa, 2012, p. 218). Cultures that do not rely on writing and reading pass down history, values, and traditions through art as a medium across generations (Diamond, 1992). Before humans began using letters to express their thoughts, they relied on pictograms, rhythms and sounds. Individuals who have taken art classes can see beauty in everything and experience moments of "Awe!" (Cabrera, 2015). According to Meyer & Meyer

(2021), art stimulates well-being and happiness.

According to Elliot Eisner (2002), art develops cognitive competencies such as building and understanding connections between people. Through collaborative artistic endeavors, students or group members can interact with one another. Art helps realize that problems can be solved in various ways, while also cultivating the ability to accept that outcomes may differ and goals can evolve during the process. It encourages personal decision-making in the absence of clear rules, enhances the use of imagination to guide further actions, teaches productive functioning with system limitations, and helps view the outside world from a unique perspective. Leveraging all of this knowledge, art is employed as a form of psychotherapy.

Therapists, psychologists, and educators incorporate art projects to assist their students and clients in finding meaning, expressing emotions, and fostering personal growth (Sousa, 2012; and VeLa, 2024). According to Cosentino & Randall (2024), art therapy helps to elicit one's fears, feelings, and fantasies and can be later used in narrative or storytelling therapies. The authors noted that art therapy can also assist individuals in solving problems, developing social skills, resolving emotional conflicts, reducing anxiety and symptoms of depression (Meyer & Meyer, 2021; and Cabrera, 2015).

Besides visual art, created to be appreciated for its beauty, there are other forms of art such as decorative art, applied art, and music that are used for therapeutic purposes. From early ages, people have used music as a means of self-expression and ethnic identity.

Music and Singing

Many scientists nowadays believe that recognizing and appreciating music is an innate human trait (He & Trainor, 2009). Music affects individuals on mental and emotional levels. It can help to regulate breathing, heart rate, blood pressure, and decrease pain (Klassen et al.,

2008). Music activates the left and right hemispheres, limbic area and frontal cortex (Sweeney, 2009; and Weinberger, 2004). People store representations of musical instrument sounds and songs in their long-term memory. Imagining music and songs activates the brain in a manner very similar to actually listening to music (Janata, 1997).

Singing and chanting, such as chanting “Om”, can help deactivate brain areas involved in the stress response (Gangadhar et al., 2011). In reference to Brene Brown (2020), humans cannot live without music. It moves us emotionally, “reaches out and offers us connection” (p. 152). Music can provide meaning during stressful situations, stimulate personal growth, enrich spiritual experiences, and empower individuals.

Educators can use music for therapeutic and academic puroposes. Music can intensify cognitive functions and promote relaxation. Some kinds of music enhance spatial and temporal reasoning and raise visual attention (Ho et al., 2007; and Jaušovec et al., 2006). Music can also strengthen social connections, revitalize hope, improve resilience, and foster better relationships in the community (Levy-Carrick & Warren, 2018). Frances Moore, emphasized, “The powerful effect of music on our mental health and broader wellbeing is being increasingly recognised, and even prescribed in some countries” (International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, 2023, p. 5). When a person listens to music she enjoys, her body often begins to move, transforming the experience into another coping mechanism — dance.

Dance and Physical Exercise

Moving in response to rhythm and/or music is called dance. Dancing can be an individual or social activity. It has evolved from sacred and spiritual rituals, such as tambourine dances around the fire, to folk, ballroom, sport, modern, and many other forms of movement set to music (Dance: Research Starters Topic, 2021). Brown (2020) believed that dance is in our DNA

and there is a strong pull between music and movement. She noticed, “Until we teach our children that they need to be concerned with how they look and with what other people think, they dance” (p. 153). From the moment children begin to move, they naturally respond to the rhythm of music when they hear it.

Dancing has been used as a therapy to help people deal with depression, eating disorders, psychotic disorders, head injuries, learning and mental disabilities. Dance is also used in physical therapy (Valentine, 2022). The branch of psychotherapy that utilizes dance is known as *dance therapy.* It is defined as "psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration of the individual, for the purpose of improving health and well-being” (American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA), 2020, para 1). According to Herring et al. (2017), movement ameliorates worry, anxiety, and feelings of energy fatigue. Salmon (2001) noticed that exercises benefit people on physiological and psychological levels.

Dr. Sallis referred to physical activities such as jogging, hiking, rolling, swimming, aerobics, biking, tennis, dancing, gardening, etc. as “a drug called exercise” (8:10). He emphasized that even short periods of movement are beneficial for human well-being (Healthy Learning, & Monterey Bay Video Production Company (Producers), & Community Wellness & Exercise is Medicine, 2014)

According to Krantz & Pennebaker (2007), people experience greater happiness and enjoyment in life when they dance and move. Any type of physical movement, with or without music, is recognized as one of the best coping mechanisms among therapists, doctors, psychologists, and educators. In reference to ADTA (2020), movement is a language and it is the first language of human beings. Nonverbal and movement-based communication starts in utero and accompanies individuals throughout their lifespan. Movement can enhance development,

support communication and connection, help individuals to express themselves, and serve practical purposes in everyday life (para. 3). Considering all the benefits of movement, it is essential for educators to adopt it as a coping mechanism for themselves and instill it into their teaching practice.

Movement enhances positive emotions and memory, thereby positively impacting the learning process. Sousa (2012) emphasized, “At some point in most lessons, students should be up and moving around, talking about the new learning” (p. 240). According to Lengel and Kuczala (2010), incorporating movement during classes helps refocus students' attention, gives students a break; allows the brain to store information and refocus; enhances brain function by supplying neurons with glucose and oxygen and stimulating the growth of new neurons; helps enhance social connection within the group. Additionally it reduces classroom stress by elevating endorphin levels and lowering cortisol levels in the bloodstream.

Nwoko et al. (2024) found in their study that teachers use exercise and nature walks as one of the most effective personal coping mechanisms. According to their research, movement was mainly emphasized as a functional way to support occupational well-being. Kostruba & Kostruba (2024) research indicated physical activity as one of the best coping mechanisms to maintain well-being and alleviating psycho-emotional tension and depression during wartime in Ukraine. There is no one answer regarding what coping mechanism will always work for everyone.

In addition to the coping mechanisms discussed in this chapter, there are many others that work for educators worldwide to maintain well-being. The most frequently used are: belief, prayer, and/or spirituality (Kostruba & Kostruba, 2024; and Nwoko et al., 2024); gratitude (D’Ansembourg, 2007); sleep (Suttles, 2024); smiling (Smile more often to beat any challenge:

Study says it's a natural coping mechanism, 2025); and the most effective, specifically for educators — setting and maintaining professional boundaries (Leon, 2023; Nwoko et al., 2024; and Suttles, 2024).

Summary

Returning to the conceptual framework discussed at the beginning of this chapter, there exists a space, a personal choice, that leads to action, bridging the gap between suffering and well-being. Ekhart Tolle (2004), explained, "Accept — then act. Whatever the present moment contains, accept it as if you had chosen it. Always work with it, not against it. Make it your friend and ally, not your enemy. This will miraculously transform your whole life" (p. 35). Taking time to mindfully acknowledge and accept life circumstances, and then identifying an effective coping mechanism to ameliorate the present when necessary, should become a habit for those striving for their own well-being and support others in doing the same.

Beth Cabrera (2015) believed that well-being largely depends on what we focus on, suggesting that it is mainly on us. Cabrera emphasized that when we focus on the positive, we create well-being. The author highlighted that dwelling on the problem is unproductive and can lead to chronic stress, and this is why it is important to shift perspectives and replace negative emotions with positive ones. Ivey et al., (2012) explained thinking positively requires effort because this emotional thought process is relatively new to human development, whereas negative emotions, such as sadness, fear, anger, surprise, and disgust are rooted in the more primitive amygdala and lower brain regions. Even though an individual should pursue what she loves (Sher, 1996), it is equally important to mindfully evaluate how those passions and actions affect herself and others, not only in a given moment, but also over the long-term. It is important to pursue what one loves while remaining mindful of venerable principles that have existed for

thousands of years. If a person relies on coping mechanisms that harm herself or others in the short or long term, educators, psychologists, or others can assist her in discovering new, healthier coping mechanisms to replace harmful ones. No matter what a person is experiencing in a moment, she needs coping mechanisms that will help her find meaning in life. Frankl (2006) emphasized,

> [M]eaning of life always changes, but it never ceases to be… [W]e
>
> can discover this meaning in life in three different ways: (1) by creating a work or doing a deed; (2) by experiencing something or encountering someone; and (3) by the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering" (p. 109).

Educators can find meaning in their own lives by teaching others and guiding them to discover meaning in theirs. They can experience the feelings of happiness and joy while teaching. They can find meaning in every meeting with students they serve. They can intentionally change their attitude toward life and guide their students to do the same.

While reading and analyzing literature about well-being, suffering, survival, being, trauma, stress, and coping mechanisms, the major gap I noticed was that only Eunice Tan (2022) in her article " 'Heartware' for the Compassionate Teacher: Humanizing the Academy through Mindsight, Attentive Love, and Storytelling Mindfulness" mentioned the use of mindfulness together with storytelling for educators. Tan's study was conceptual and proposed to humanize the academy by integrating mindfulness and storytelling while purposefully developing pedagogical kindness and attentive love in teaching practices. There is a gap in literature addressing why, during prolonged trauma or after trauma, it is important to observe one's stories and intentionally focus on each moment as much as possible. Additionally, there are not enough studies exploring which coping mechanisms are effective for educators and their students during

prolonged trauma to maintain well-being. My study aimed to shed light on these and other topics related to maintaining well-being, education, and coping mechanisms.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

> We must therefore rediscover, after the natural world, the social world, not as an object or sum of objects, but as a permanent field or dimension of existence. ― Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*

To rediscover the phenomenon of the social world, humans should remain aware that they are an integral part of the system around them (Gomez et al., 2017). Just like the natural world, the social world is in a constant state of change. Through continuous connection with others, we change each other either for better or worse. This qualitative study employed a phenomenological approach, using the stories of Ukrainian educators to explore their perceptions of maintaining well–being while living through wartime. Data were collected through a survey (Leavy, 2023) and semi-structured interviews (Peoples, 2021). The rationale for this method is that the phenomenological approach enabled a more in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of Ukrainian educators during wartime (Creswell, & Poth, 2017).

This qualitative research examined how educators maintain their well-being while experiencing prolonged traumatic events. I recognize the importance of acknowledging traumatic events in the lives of educators, students, and their families, and the value of sharing effective coping mechanisms among educators for managing trauma (Berger et al., 2022).

In this chapter, I will outline the research design utilized in this study, the guiding research questions, the data collection procedures, the participants, and the data analysis methods.

Research Design

As a qualitative researcher, I was interested in understanding how Ukrainian educators interpret their experiences, construct their realities, and characterize their experiences while residing in non-occupied territories of Ukraine during wartime (Giorgi, 2012; Husserl, 1931; Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative research enabled a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences by examining factors that influence the personal and social aspects of their lives (Gelling, 2015). This research was focused on finding "meaning in context" (Merriam, & Tisdell, 2016). Leavy (2023) explained, "Qualitative approaches to research value depth of meaning and people's subjective experiences and their meaning-making processes (p. 137).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), qualitative research enabled me to make the world of Ukrainian educators visible through the interpretation of participants' responses. By assuming less in advance and utilizing open-ended survey questions and semi structured interviews, the collected data centered on participants' explanations, intentions, and judgments (Howe, 1985). The qualitative research method allowed for the collection of rich data, illustrated with vivid examples and conveyed in the language of Ukrainian educators translated to English.

Phenomenology Design

This qualitative study employed a phenomenological research methodology. Throughout the study, I collected, documented, and analyzed the lived experiences of Ukrainian educators teaching during wartime. Experiences were shared by sharing stories during interviews (Mytko, 2022). In this study, I aim to reveal common elements of human resilience that help maintain well-being amid the challenges of war (Magrini, 2014).

The phenomenological approach enabled me to explore how Ukrainian educators cope with prolonged trauma while simultaneously supporting their students and other stakeholders.

This study sought to explore strategies for maintaining well-being during wartime and helping others to do the same, focusing on Ukrainian educators as a phenomenon (Peoples, 2021). Employing a phenomenological design provided the framework to achieve this goal.

Guiding Research Questions (GRQ)

The overarching question of my dissertation was: What experiences of maintaining well-being (if any) are Ukrainian educators having, despite living through prolonged traumas associated with wartime?

While completing my dissertation, I looked for answers to the following three guiding sub-questions:

- GRQ1. What coping strategies do educators use to take care of themselves? How do they describe these strategies?
- GRQ2. What coping strategies do educators use with their students? How do they describe these strategies?
- GRQ3. How do educators perceive mindfulness and storytelling?

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection involved two instruments: a survey and individual interviews. The survey allowed me to collect a broader range of data, while the interviews provided deeper insights into the participants' experiences and strategies.

Survey

Braun et al. (2021) explained that surveys in qualitative research enhance the ability to better and more deeply understand social issues. The Qualtrics survey sought to identify the coping strategies employed by Ukrainian educators to maintain their own well-being and to support their students during wartime. It was designed using Qualtrics in order to protect the

identities of the participants. The first four questions were designed to collect demographic data. One of the questions, regarding gender, was a close-ended question (Fowler, 2013). The other three, which focused on instructional setting, age group, years of experience in the field of education, and current role, were open-ended questions.

The survey's two primary questions included a Likert scale to measure the frequency of strategy use. The scale options were as follows: one for always, two for often, three for sometime, four for hardly, five for planning to start soon, and six for never. In the final version of the survey, 20 options were included to help educators describe how they maintain their own well-being. Nine questions included an option for participants to explain their answers, effectively converting them from close-ended to open-ended questions if participants chose to elaborate.

These nine options were: watching TV; breathing exercises; physical exercises, walking, and/or dancing; music, singing in chorus, playing instruments, listening to music; meditating; storytelling; mindful exercises; reading /writing; and others. The other 11 questions were: searching the news after air raid alerts; personal communications / meeting speaking with close relatives and friends; going to psychologist or other specialists; technology: playing games on the computer, phone, playstation, or other electronic device; using social media; arts or craft projects; using alcohol or tobacco; using substances; using prescribed psychotropic medications; using non-prescribed psychotropic medications; and praying or using religious rituals.

The survey was accessible online via computer, tablet, or phone, as was suggested by Stake (2010). The survey questions were designed to provide an overall picture and assist in answering all guiding research subquestions. A link to the survey was emailed to educators in Ukraine. I requested that the survey be distributed among a diverse group of educators, including

both male and female teachers, and new and experienced professionals. Completing the survey took approximately 15 minutes. The final question inquired about the respondents' willingness to participate in a follow-up interview (for more information see Appendix B).

This approach was informed by mock interviews previously conducted with Ukrainian educators, who indicated that, given the current situation in the country and the specific educational and cultural context, the likelihood of educators completing a survey with open-ended questions was low. Before devising the multiple-choice options for questions five and six (concerning the use of coping strategies for educators and their students), I carefully analyzed the field notes I had taken while attending peer support groups for Ukrainian educators, where effective coping strategies were discussed.

After developing the questions, I tested them with Ukrainian educators involved in the VeLa project and refined the options based on their feedback to ensure they aligned with their cultural context. For instance, I initially included cooking and gardening as answer options for question five. However, feedback revealed that most Ukrainian women, comprising the majority of my survey's respondents, view cooking and gardening more as survival strategies than coping mechanisms. They suggested adding an "other" option at the end of the provided answers, allowing educators who view gardening and cooking as effective coping mechanims to include them.

In the original version of my survey, I included more than 20 answer options\ to ensure a comprehensive range of responses. However, educators suggested shortening the list of answer options by combining similar options. I combined 'Using Tobacco' and 'Using Alcohol'. I combined the options 'Going to Psychologist', 'Going to Psychiatrist', and 'Going to Family Doctor' into a single option: 'Going to Psychologist or Other Specialists'.

After identifying volunteers for interviews through my survey, I selected twelve educators and proceeded to conduct the interviews. I took into account demographic information: gender, current role, years of teaching experience, and work setting to select the most diverse group possible for the interviews. This approach aimed to capture a broad range of perspectives on coping strategies employed by educators during wartime.

Interviews

According to Creswell and Poth (2017), interviews are the best way to understand lived experiences as a phenomenon. The study employed semi-structured interviews, an approach widely recommended for phenomenological research (Kvale, 1983), with a group of twelve educators. The interviews were semi structured with guiding open-ended interview questions (Creswell et al., 2013) as a starting point (Benner, 1994). Interviewing a smaller group of educators allowed me to more deeply explore and describe their experiences and the strategies they use to maintain their well-being.

Following the standards of Churchill (2022) and Moustakas (1994), I prepared a list of questions to guide data collection during the interviews. The interview had five open-ended questions, followed by a discussion. This approach allowed the participant to describe their experiences in their own words. The interview sought to answer guiding questions one, two, and three: How do educators describe the use of coping strategies for themselves? How do educators describe the use of coping strategies for their students? How do educators perceive mindfulness and storytelling?

To learn how educators maintain well-being during prolonged traumatic experiences and support their students while living through wartime, I asked them the following questions (Table 1).

Table 1

Interview questions

Open-ended question	Possible follow-up to participant response
What can you tell me about your experience as an educator working during the period of war?	Thank you for sharing your story and for the work you are doing daily.
What strategies do you use to maintain your well-being?	Do you feel that war events affect you and your students? How?
How do you acknowledge the war events in your work with children?	Why? Or why not? If yes, how do you do it? How do you deal with yours and your students' negative emotions?
What strategies do you use in the classroom with your students?	Can you give me an example of that? When does that work best
Have you heard about mindfulness as a strategy- what does it mean to you?	Do you use mindfulness in your work (for self or with students)?
Have you heard about storytelling as a strategy- what does it mean to you?	Do you use storytelling in your work (for self or with students)?
What advice do you have for other adults working with children at this time?	Thank you

The interviews were conducted on Zoom and were audio and video recorded. As a backup, recordings were also made using the Voice Memos app. I sent participants the Zoom link several days in advance after confirming a mutually agreeable time via email and receiving their signed consent form. Following the recommendations of Frechette et al. (2020), the interviews lasted approximately one hour. During the interviews, I treated each participant's story as a unique phenomenon to be described and categorized. In the next section, I will provide a description of the survey and interview participants.

Participants

I used a convenient, snowball sampling method to recruit 163 participants for the survey. Around 43 responses were left empty. I emailed the survey to educators in Ukraine with whom I am familiar and asked them to forward it to other educators. I invited a diverse group of survey participants, including both male and female educators, as well as new and experienced professionals, from day schools, preschools, boarding schools, colleges and universities, and afterschool programs currently teaching in unoccupied regions of the Ukraine.

Survey participants were asked if they would volunteer to be interviewed to share their stories and strategies for living and teaching during the war. From the 163 individuals who took the survey, I selected 12 educators to share detailed accounts of their journeys toward well-being. To ensure diversity, I chose participants from different educational settings, genders, roles, and levels of experience.

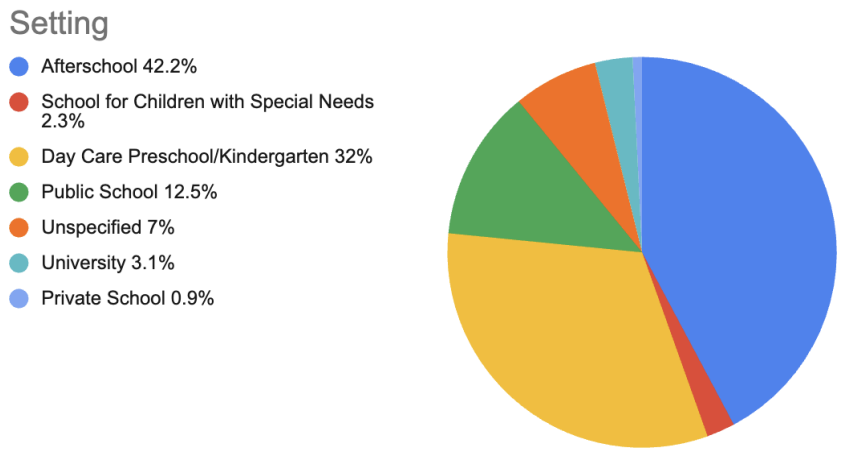
Demographic Data of Survey Participants

The question regarding gender was answered by 132 participants. Of these, 92 percent or 122 people identified as female, while eight percent or 10 people identified as male. A total of 128 participants responded to the other four demographic questions, which detailed the settings where they work, their current role, years of experience in the field of education, and the age groups of the students they work with. According to the responses, educators who participated in the survey work in settings such as afterschool programs, preschools/kindergartens, public schools, universities, and private schools. Participants hold various roles, including teacher, administrator, psychologists, professor, teacher assistant, librarian, speech therapist, and coach. Their experience in education ranges from less than one year to over 40 years. Participants work with children as young as 18 months to adults. Their answers are summarized in the charts below

(Figures 3, 4, 5, and 6).

Figure 3

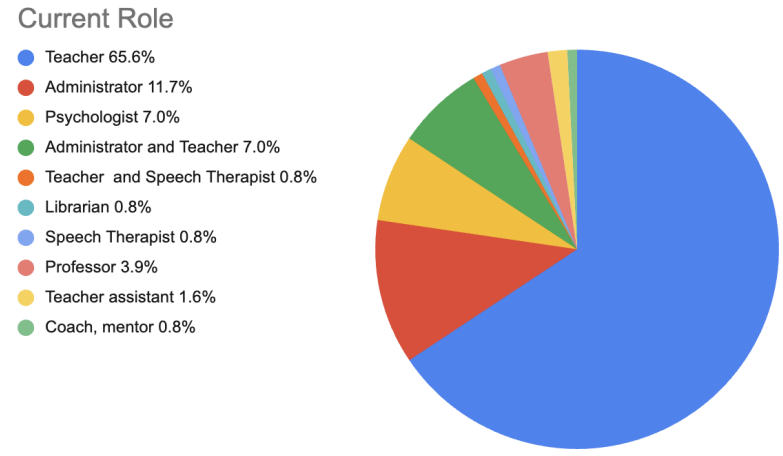
Setting



Note. According to the survey results 42.2% of educators work in the afterschool setting, while 32% are employed in preschools or kindergartens. Additionally 12.5% work in public school settings , and 7% did not specify their workplace setting. Educators working in universities account for 3.1%, 2.3 % work with children who have special needs, and 0.9% are employed in private school settings.

Figure 4

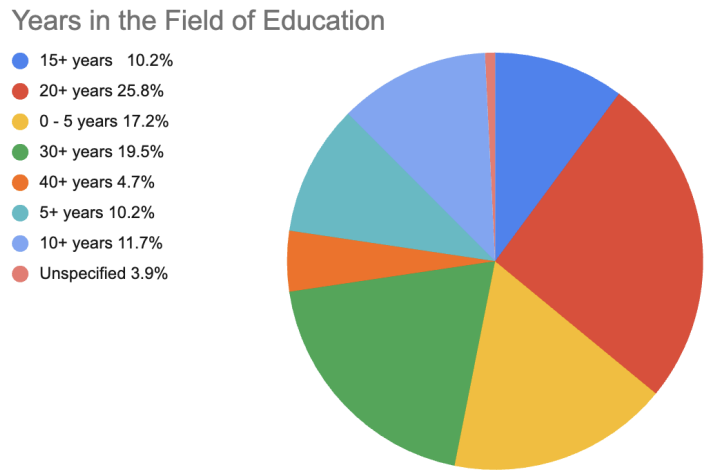
Current Role



Note. According to the participants' responses, 65.6% of educators who took the survey were teachers. Additionally, 11.7% were administrators, and seven percent of educators held dual roles as both administrators and teachers. Another seven percent were psychologists, while 3.9% were professors. Teacher assistants accounted for 1.6% of participants. Less than one percent were librarians, coaches, mentors, speech therapists, or a combination of teacher and speech therapist.

Figure 5

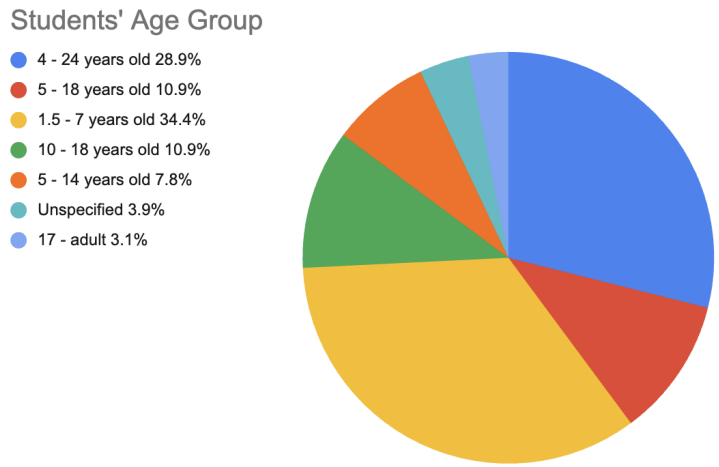
Years in the Field of Education



Note. According to the survey results, 25.8% of participants have worked in the field of Education for more than 20 years, while 19.5% have over 30 years of experience. Additionally, 17.2% have worked in Education for less than five years, 11.7% for more than 10 years, and 10.2% for more than 15 years. 10.2% have been in the field for more than five years, 4.7% for more than 40 years, and 3.9% did not specify their experience.

Figure 6

Students' Age Group



Note. According to the participants' responses, 34.4% work with children aged one and a half to seven years, and 28.9% work with students aged four to 24 years. Additionally, 10.9% work with students aged five to 18 years, while 7.8% focus on students aged five to 14 years. A total of 3.9% did not specify their answers, and 3.1% work with students aged 17 years to adults.

As you can see in the figures above, the majority of survey participants were teachers, most of whom work in after school or preschool/kindergarten settings with children aged eighteen months to seven years and four to 24 years. In Ukraine, both settings are part of the education system financed and governed by the Ministry of Education. Half of the educators have worked as pedagogues for more than 20 years.

Demographic Data of Interview Participants

Among the 12 participants selected for the interviews, two were in their twenties; two in their thirties; three in their forties; three in their fifties; one in her sixties; one in her seventies. One out of 12 participants was male and 11 were females. It was not easy to find even one male educator who agreed to be interviewed, as most male educators are currently at the frontline, with many having been drafted or killed. The interview data were collected between February 13, 2024 and March 11, 2024. These interviews provided a snapshot of educators' descriptions,

perceptions, and strategies that helped them cope with traumatic events during wartime. If the data had been collected earlier or later, the results might be slightly different. The burnout level of Ukrainian educators has been increasing daily since the full-scale invasion began.

Table 2

Description of Interview Participants

Pseudonym. Date of the Interview. Age. Setting	**Years in Education. Current Role. Students' Age. Fact(s).**
1. Sanya. Interviewed on 02/13/24. In her forties. Public urban afterschool center.	Sanya has worked in education for more than 25 years. She currently serves as an administrator, working closely with teachers, parents, other administrators, and students, mostly teenagers. Attended a chorus since elementary school at the center where she now works. Sanya is very honest and believes that the higher purpose of life is to serve others. She is an accurate shooter and loves cats.
2. Maryna. Interviewed on 02/17/24. In her fifties. Public rural school and art therapy center.	Maryna has worked in education for more than 30 years and currently serves as an elementary school and Ukrainian Language teacher. She loves her students and all children, and has an enormous amount of energy that she shares with others. Maryna cares deeply about her students and everyone around her and asks for nothing for herself. Her greatest joy comes from giving to others. Maryna is the co-founder of an art therapy center where she volunteers during her free time. "She is a real hero. No one will ever give her a medal or write about her, but she is the one who goes to that village and changes life by life. She helps her students. She might be the only person in that school who children can rely on" (A. Fodor, personal communication, April 21, 2024). Maryna loves dogs.
3. Sergij. Interviewed on 02/18/24. In his thirties. Public urban afterschool center.	Sergij has worked in education for more than 10 years as a programming instructor and administrator. He assists educators with technologies at his center, within the city, and throughout the region. Sergij works directly with children aged 10 - 13 for approximately eight hours per week. He also presents demos and projects to educators across the region to help them improve their qualifications. Sergej loves dance, history, ethnography, and genealogy. He has published a book about the history of the region where he lives. His current favorite type of dance is tutting. He loves all animals, but especially dogs, for their loyalty.

4. Snezhana. Interviewed on 02/21/24. In her forties. Public urban school.	Snezhana has worked in Education for more than 25 years and currently teaches fourth graders, aged 10 to 11. Since the beginning of the war, she has been teaching fully online. There are constant air raid alerts in her city, with many buildings destroyed. Two buildings near her home were recently ruined, resulting in civilian casualties. She lost her 21 year old nephew just three weeks before the interview. Her most frequently used coping mechanisms are checking homework and teaching. She loves cats.
5. Tamara. Interviewed on 02/22/24. In her fifties. Public suburban school.	Tamara has worked in education for more than 25 years and currently teaches first grade, working with six to seven year old children. She also serves as a vice-principal. At the beginning of the war, Tamara opened an Art Therapy Center in her town, and volunteered there during her free time. She is pursuing her Master's degree in Social Work in Education, and incorporates art, book, and toy therapy into her teaching. Tamara has two sons in their twenties and still read books aloud to them when she can.
6. Olena. Interviewed on 2/23/24. In her forties. Public urban preschool and kindergarten.	Olena has worked in Education for more than 25 years, and currently works as a psychologist with teachers and children one and half to seven years old. Her favorite forms of therapy are play and narrative, which she combines with art, snow, sand, and toys. She has a 7 year old granddaughter who loves to dance but spends too much time on her phone. Along with other educators, Olena transformed a cellar into a favorite place for children. She has relatives in both occupied and unoccupied territories. She loves cats.
7. Inna. Interviewed on 2/24/24. In her twenties. Primary rural public school.	Inna has worked in Education for seven years, since she was 18 years old. In her first class she taught 27 children on her own. She began teaching immediately after earning her associate degree while pursuing her bachelor's degree. She currently works with third graders and also teaches Math and Ukrainian language online to Ukrainian children living abroad. Inna is a highly inspiring young educator. She loves books, especially physical books, and enjoys reading about psychology. Inna loves animals and has one dog and 12 cats, which she rescued from the streets after they were abandoned.
8. Diana. Interviewed on 02/26/24. In her twenties. Public urban afterschool center and UNICEF.	Diana has been in Education for more than five years. She works as a psychologist and administrator at the center and serves as a mentor forUNICEF, working online and in person with teenagers aged 13 to 21. She travels to unoccupied territories to meet with her students. Diana studied in Finland for a year to learn more about the Finnish school system. She is fluent in English. She loves Lego and dogs.

9. Nina. Interviewed on 02/27/24. In her thirties. Public military college.	Nina has worked in Education for more than 15 years and holds a PhD in Psychology. She currently works with college level students aged 16 to 20 as a professor, and volunteers with young children as an art therapist. In her spare time, she volunteers as a crisis psychologist at a non-profit that helps women escape domestic violence. Nina has a four year old daughter and 10 God children. Since the full-scale invasion, she has been writing a daily dairy and sharing it on her FaceBook page. She loves cats.
10. Nadiya. Interviewed on 03/02/24. In her sixties. Rural boarding school for the deaf.	Nadiya has worked in Education for more than 40 years and currently works as a craft teacher with 11 - 13 years old children. She loves creating craft with her students and on her own. She loves her students, especially those who went to the frontline and stays in close contact with them. Along with other educators at her school, she helped establish a museum in memory of their students who were killed in the war. Nadiya's daughter and granddaughter live in Germany, and she frequently speaks with them via Viber or Telegram. She dreams of their return to Ukraine after Victory. She loves cats.
11. Valentyna. Interviewed on 03/04/24. In her fifties. Rural public school.	Valentyna has worked in Education for more than 30 years. She currently teaches first graders full-time, as well as Chemistry to seventh, eighth, and ninth graders. She also serves as a vice principal at the same school. Valentyna loves children and has two grandchildren, seven and three years old. She cultivates half a hectare of land with her daughter and son in law, and cares for ducks, chicken, bees, dogs, and a cow.
12. Larysa. Interviewed on 03/06/24 and on 03/11/24. We had to stop the interview on 03/06 due to the air raid alert. In her seventies. Rural boarding school for children with learning desabilities.	Larysa has worked in Education for more than 45 years and currently works at a boarding school with children 7 - 18 years old with various learning disabilities. Together with her students, she knits and embroiders pictures, using these activities to help the children learn to count, concentrate, and create. Larysa and her students also knit socks, gloves, and sweaters for soldiers at the frontline, and she stays in touch with her students who are serving there. She is a widow and manages a little farm at home, cultivating half a hectare of land on her own in her free time.

Note: This table was designed to show the reader that behind each pseudonym is a real person — an educator — who is experiencing the everyday trauma of war. These educators are real, multidimensional individuals.

Data Analysis

Phenomenological research calls for structured and specific methods of analysis (Moustakas, 1994). The general phases of my data analysis included data translation, preparation and organization, initial immersion, coding, categorizing and theming, and interpretation (Leavy, 2023, p. 164). Table 3 below identifies the interview and survey questions that helped to answer the three guiding research questions.

Table 3

Interview Question Alignments

GRQ/ theme	Interview Questions	Survey Questions
GRQ1. What coping strategies do educators use to take care of themselves? How do they describe these strategies?	What can you tell me about your experience as an educator working during the period of war? What strategies do you use to maintain your well-being?	Survey question five (for more information see Appendix B).
GRQ2. What coping strategies do educators use with their students? How do they describe these strategies?	What strategies do you use in the classroom with your students? How do you acknowledge the war events in your work with children? What advice do you have for other adults working with children at this time?	Survey question six (for more information see Appendix B).
GRQ3. How do educators perceive mindfulness and storytelling?	Have you heard about storytelling as a strategy- what does it mean to you? Have you heard about mindfulness as a strategy- what does it mean to you	Survey question five and six (for more information see Appendix B)

Survey

The survey collected demographic and general information to provide an overview of the participants' experiences. The survey included a forced-choice list of strategies, with an option for additional explanations and an 'other' category. It began with frequency of use. To synthesize the survey responses, I applied the structured tabular approach. This thematic analysis approach was designed by Robinson (2022) for working with brief texts and will be utilized to develop and explore themes in the survey responses. I created a matrix in which I recorded each question along with all its responses, employing an open coding method. I found common themes in the answers and organized them into categories using color coding. I synthesized the results, focusing on the coping mechanisms most frequently used according to the survey. I looked for patterns and themes. The description and survey data results were further supported by data from the interviews.

I followed the steps below to analyze the collected data:

1. Translated all responses from Ukrainian to English
2. Described the personal experiences of the phenomenon
3. Transferred the answers into the matrix table (Robinson, 2022)
4. Color coded the responses
5. Categorized the codes
6. Lastly, conducted an analysis with a specific focus on the frequency of coping mechanisms, and separately on frequency of mindfulness, breathing, meditation and storytelling, and the short descriptive explanations derived from questions five and six of the survey.

Interviews

The interviews illuminated themes related to the participants' coping strategies during prolonged trauma. They helped develop a deeper understanding of these strategies and also validated the findings from the survey. The interview transcripts were first reviewed for accuracy and then translated from Ukrainian to English. In this initial phase, I removed identifying information and assigned pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

While applying phenomenological analysis and representation (Creswell & Poth, 2017) to analyze the interview recordings, I followed these steps, adapted from Moustakas (1994):

1. Read through the written transcripts to gain an overall sense of them - a gestalt understanding.
2. On the second reading, I added notes in the margins of the Microsoft Word Document and highlighted participant statements that felt important.
3. Developed a list of significant statements and phrases from the transcripts.
4. Grouped codes into meaningful units or themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006; and Smith et al., 2009).
5. Used textural description with direct quotes to define the phenomenon (Frechette et al., 2020).
6. Explained the how of the phenomenon through structural description and coding (Guest et al., 2012).
7. Validated the findings through member checking with participants (Cuncic, 2022).

Data Interpretation

The study findings included a composite description of the context and essence of the teachers' experiences (Terrell, 2023, p. 173). I interpreted these data using social constructivism

(Mertens, 2015) and pragmatism (Cherryholmes, 1992; and Murphy, 1990) frameworks. Social constructivism allowed me to rely on the participants' perspectives of their circumstances, which were shaped by social and historical factors. This approach helped me to develop a "pattern of meaning" (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 24). By using broad and general questions I provided participants with the opportunity to construct their own meaning of the situation (Burr, 2015).

Pragmatism guided me to identifying solutions to the problem (Patton, 1990). While answering the question "What strategies work for Ukrainian Educators during wartime?" I performed thematic analysis (Robinson, 2022) to draw conclusions from the survey responses.

Limitation and Delimitations of the Study

The study was conducted virtually in February and March 2024 with Ukrainian educators living in non-occupied territories of Ukraine during wartime. Participants were recruited for the online survey through my personal connections in Ukraine. However, this snowball sampling method might have excluded educators who are more isolated. The 15-minute survey was purposefully short in order to capture preliminary information and recruit twelve participants who agreed to participate in interviews. The educators who agreed to be interviewed may have experiences shared by many Ukrainian educators. These participants were invited to a Zoom meeting at a time convenient for them, despite the unpredictability of internet and power outages or air raids that could have interrupted the interviews. However, only one interview was interrupted during data collection.

In this research, I recognize internal limitations, including my personal biases. As a Ukrainian working with a group of Ukrainian educators and psychologists, I have direct insights into the ongoing trauma. Due to my lived experiences, I believe that certain coping techniques can transform trauma. I tried to bracket (Tufford and Newman, 2012) my perceptions while

conducting the study. I bracket my experience by acknowledging my beliefs, my epistemology, and ontology in the first chapter of this dissertation. While collecting and analyzing the data I further bracketed and suspended my biases in chapters four and five by reflecting on the social, cultural, and historical forces that shape my interpretations (Creswell and Miller, 2000).

There were important external limitations to note. Due to the war, it was not possible to meet participants of my study in person or observe them in their work environments. Participants may not have been entirely honest during interviews due to a lack of trust. Even though I am fluent in all the languages spoken by participants, culturally I am more American than Ukrainian, as I have spent all my adult and independent life in the USA. Additionally, one of the limitations was that participants had been living under unusual, prolonged trauma for many years. Translation is another limitation of the research, as the nuances, beauty, and emotional depth of language can differ significantly between languages..

To mitigate these limitations, I incorporated the following steps into the study.

1. I acknowledged my biases in the dissertation. To do so, I maintained daily reflective journals and educated myself by conducting a literature review on stress, trauma, being, surviving, suffering, well-being and coping mechanisms. I actively participated in peer support groups and case studies within the VeLa project. During these support groups Ukrainian educators meet weekly to discuss the coping strategies they were currently employing. During the case studies educators shared the most challenging cases they were facing during this period. I maintained field notes from these meetings for future reference.

2. The fact that I am fluent in Ukrainian, russian, and surzhik (a mix of Ukrainian and russian) enabled me to understand open-ended survey responses and effectively communicate with all participants during the interview, using their preferred language.
3. I shared my findings with my advisor and other professionals in the field to validate them.
4. I presented my findings to Ukrainian psychologists and educators collaborating with me on the VeLa Project to validate them through member checks.
5. I met with educators at times that were convenient for them and was flexible regarding interruptions due to safety or technology issues. If the interview was interrupted by an air raid alert, I rescheduled and met with the same person a few days later at her convenience to complete the interview.

Validity

A pilot study was conducted prior to the actual study to evaluate the survey and interview questions for potential flaws (Srinivasan & Lohith 2017). To imbue my study with credibility, I also incorporated various types of validity (Adler & Clark, 2015). The survey and interviews included questions about coping mechanisms for maintaining well-being among educators and their students showcasing their face validity. Sharing the survey and interview questions with experts in the field in the United States and Ukraine for their evaluation ensured that all significant facets of the construct were addressed, thus establishing the content validity of my research.

By interviewing twelve teachers living in unoccupied territories in Ukraine during wartime, I identified similar codes in their stories, which enabled me to generalize how coping mechanisms, mindfulness and storytelling help my participants to improve their lives and the

lives of their students. In later chapters, I will also discuss how my findings can be applied "to the world at large" and "translated into another context" (Cuncic, 2022), thereby demonstrating the ecological validity of my study (Leavy, 2023).

According to Cuncic (2022), I incorporated both internal and external validity in my research. For internal validity, I used a random selection of participants who represented the population I intended to study: all were educators living in non-occupied Ukrainian territories during wartime. Additionally, I employed member checking by seeking participants' feedback (Creswell & Poth, 2017) , ensuring that my findings accurately reflected their experiences. For external validity, I regularly consulted with my advisor and other experts in the field to share my findings.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe methods used to complete this research. The most suitable approach to study the lived experiences of educators during wartime was phenomenology, as it allowed participants' stories to be captured without my input. The use of Likert scale close-ended and open-ended questions provided an opportunity to gather broad data for the study. Open-ended initial and follow up interview questions facilitated the documentation of participants' experiences. This chapter also includes a description of the survey and interview participants, data collection procedures, analysis and interpretation processes, limitations and delimitations, and the validity of the study.

The results of this study are presented in the next two chapters. It includes participants' detailed descriptions of trauma and the coping mechanisms they employed to deal with trauma during wartime, explored as a phenomenon in this research. Themes extracted from the data were used to answer the research question.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

And then the day came,
when the risk
to remain tight
in a bud
was more painful
than the risk
it took
to blossom.
— Anaïs Nin, *Risk*

While experiencing trauma or stress, everyone chooses how to cope with painful circumstances in their own way. This study aims to understand what experiences of maintaining well-being Ukrainian educators have, despite living through the prolonged traumas of wartime. This chapter presents the findings of the research in answering the three questions: 1. What coping strategies do educators use to take care of themselves? 2. What coping strategies do educators use with their students? 3. How do educators perceive mindfulness and storytelling?

The first section describes the perception of trauma by Ukrainian educators. The second section disassembles coping mechanisms that Ukrainian educators use to maintain their own well-being and to deal with prolonged traumatic experiences of the war. The third section highlights how educators see imprints of war on their students. The fourth section depicts what coping mechanisms educators use with their students to maintain students' well-being. The fifth section explores How do educators perceive mindfulness and storytelling. The major findings are highlighted and the last section describes the meaning of living through the war for Ukrainian educators before the results are summarized in the conclusion.

July 2024

Meet Natasha. (In late 90th Turks and some European nations referred to all Ukrainian women as "natashas".) This Natasha has been working as a teacher for a long time. For more than two years she has been living through constant air raid alerts. Explosions happen unexpectedly, near and far. Sometimes the apartment has been shaken from a blast wave… and (as said in one of the lectures from Neuroscience) her brain has been constantly shaken by those explosions as well. During the school year, when an air raid alert starts, she must lead her students to safety underground while continuing to teach them the rigorous curriculum of a Ukrainian school.

Natasha feels that she was always a teacher because she manages to teach everywhere and feels that "there are no other people's children". She cares deeply about every child she meets, always trying to bring some light into the lives of those she encounters. She constantly learns to be able to come to school and engage her students, especially teenagers who don't see any light in the future and lack motivation to study.

She lived through COVID and it was hard because she had to learn a lot of new technologies and she had to see her students in those little rectangles on the screen. War is different. During the war, she teaches as she is told, sometimes in person, sometimes hybrid, or sometimes online. No matter how the education is delivered to those young brains, she has to be available to her students and their parents from early mornings to late nights. On the weekends, she volunteers at the art center as an art therapist with children who are internal refugees, as well with those whose parents are in the army, missing, or at the cemetery.

When the full-scale invasion began that early morning on February 24, 2022, she could not believe that it was really happening. Everyone thought it was just disinformation. Even

though teachers had to bring children underground for drills over the last three months; even though her sister, now living in occupied territory, had warned of russian soldiers present on the streets months earlier; even though russia stationed missiles all around the Motherland border; even though all Ukrainian lawmakers sent their children abroad; and foreign companies had relocated their offices. She did not believe it was happening. When it happened, she could not believe that it would take longer than several weeks, maybe months. After all, she is living in the XXI century and it seems impossible that a country located in the geographical center of Europe could be heavily bombed for more than two years, right?

She remembers that first day vividly. Everyone came to school, even parents. They hugged each other for the last time and the administration switched to online education. Her daughter, together with her niece and granddaughter left for Poland and from there to Germany. They are still there. Her granddaughter takes classes in German and Ukrainian schools. They hope to return after the Victory… Observing what is happening around the country now, the reality of their return seems more and more chimeric. She is happy in Ukraine. Her mother and mother in law need her around. Her students probably need her even more.

In the beginning, the question "What can I do?" was on everyone's mind. People united. They came to school to weave nets for the frontline. They met internal migrants and refugees and gave them food and clothes. They collected donations for the Ukrainian military: underwear, socks, boots, warm clothes, sleeping bags, helmets, and even bulletproof vests. They collected medications and tourniquets for boys. Since the beginning of the war her values have changed dramatically. She has no more long term goals. She has no more plans for the future. Everything blended together into pain, rage, despondency, and a crumb of hope …

Прильоти [*Pryljoty,* Explosions of Airborne Munitions]

Natasha, in the vignette above, is a combination of participants' experiences, words, and feelings to describe the phenomenon of teaching during war. In the following analysis of data the 12 participants interviewed have been given pseudonyms in order to use their words. At times the sentiment of the literal translation from Ukrainian to English is lost and therefore Ukrainian words and phrases like прильоти are used for emphasis.

This first section shares the context of the educators teaching throughout a war and years of прильоти. At the beginning, this section explains how Ukrainian educators perceive the effects of the war on themselves through the lens of different types of loss (Barringer, n.d.). Secondly, this section describes how participants feel the consequences of war on their emotional, physical, and cognitive levels (Barringer, n.d.). In conclusion, this section summarizes the specifics of being an educator while enduring prolonged traumatic experiences from the point of view of Ukrainian educators.

The following quotes show how educators describe their present conditions. Nina, as a psychologist shared, “We (educators) have both first and secondary trauma. It’s very hard not to go crazy, to survive, and to be effective at work.” Snezhana commented, **“**On the surface, I think the war doesn’t affect me, but deep down I think it does… There is a lot of pain in every heart.” The pain that Ukrainian educators experience is directly connected to all types of loss: permanent/death, non-death, anticipatory, and ambiguous (Barringer, n.d.). Sanya delineated their experience as “Loss. Or fear of loss. Loss of everything or loss of relatives and close people.” In short, participants' experiences can be described as “trauma”, “pain”, and “loss”.

Since the beginning of the war, permanent loss or death has touched every Ukrainian. All participants shared that they knew someone who had passed away because of the war. As

educators, all participants experience not only the permanent loss of their friends and families, but also the loss of their students. Larysa lamented, “We lost our boys. They were so beautiful.” Valentyna added, “We have boys in our village who went to war and did not return. It’s tragic. They all went to our school. All teachers knew them. It’s not just someone else. They were our students.” Nina confirmed, “It happened recently. There was a boy that graduated last year whom I taught. It’s very frightening. It affects his classmates and all of us. There are many like him.” Permanent loss is deeply intertwined with anticipatory loss for all Ukrainian educators.

Those with close ones on the frontline have been exposed to anticipatory loss every minute. Valentyna described, “Our hearts are filled with pain and worry because we don’t know if these boys will return.” In addition to worrying about others on the frontline and in occupied regions, all participants experience daily anticipatory loss during air raid alerts. Maryna confessed, “I feel that when someone is speaking loudly, it is still an air raid alert.” Air raid alerts resound so often that they feel something is missing when there isn’t one. Nadiya shared, “All of these air raid alerts are always there”. When air raid alerts sound, they do not know where the explosion will occur.

When explosions occur nearby, they feel the impact on every level. As Sanya explained, “Even if you turn off your phone, when a rocket or a plane flies overhead, you wake up not because of fear (though that’s part of it), but because you can feel the shockwave.” Sergij added, “It feels like your body has been shaken.” Physically feeling the explosions while being responsible for the lives of their students make this experience even harder for educators.

Besides having to shelter themselves, Ukrainian educators have to take their students underground. Sanya depicted that **“**Many adults and children turn red when they hear explosions or the sound of planes. Red spots appear on their bodies. They scream, cry and struggle to

breathe.” Inna disclosed, “When we were online it was not as terrifying as now. I was only afraid for my own life. Now I am responsible for all these children’s lives.” All participants shared that while being underground, they felt “scared”, “unsafe”, “anxious”, “upset”, and “panicking”. Being in shelters with students is aggravated by the fact that most of the shelters are cellars without ventilation, that were not designed to accommodate people for long periods of time.

Maryna shared,“I know what our school is made of and how dangerous it is to be underground.” The school basements are cold and damp year round and frequently there is not enough space for teachers to sit. During an electricity outage, there is no light and they use flashlights. Some participants reported that the “floor frequently flooded, and there is dust all around”. It’s physically harmful to stay there. Some participants shared that they feel their noses, eyes, and even lungs burning while underground.

Although Olena shared that they have “more alerts and more попаданий (*popadanij,* russian: when a rocket hits its target)”, they still have to decide whether to go underground or rely on the rule of two walls (hiding in between two bearing walls with no windows). Sergij described, “If it’s a serious bombing, then we wake everyone up and head underground.” Because of air raid alerts at night, all participants reported changes to their sleeping routines that affected all aspects of their lives. Lack of sleep is one of many forms of non-death loss experienced by Ukrainian educators.

Non-death loss for participants includes the loss of financial stability, planned or unplanned water and electricity outages, the loss of relationships, hope, and the ability to travel. It also includes the loss of beloved architectural monuments, buildings, and entire cities. Sanya explained, **“**When you think about how people lived before war… They hoped for the future… They bought properties, and now they lost everything”. These losses give rise to uncertainty.

From the participants' words, uncertainty is expressed through a lack of safety, an inability to make short or long term plans, and a lack of understanding about when and how the war will end. Nina complained, "My personal experiences have transferred into the professional aspects of my life. You go to work, but then you are sent online; or there is no electricity; or there is shelling. You don't know what to do." Olena shared, "You can see that even children are tired of war because of uncertainty. We are all waiting for that "soon": "it will be better soon… soon Dad will be home." Uncertainty also correlates with the ambiguous loss experienced by educators.

All educators shared experiences of ambiguous loss of students or relatives. It was expressed through the migration of millions of people abroad, which dramatically changed them. Everyone noticed changes in some people around them, creating obstacles for further communication. Valentyna shared, "At present, everything and everyone is separated." Nadiya summarized it, "The war is a traumatic event. All participants in the educational process find themselves in various difficult conditions, accompanied by a multitude of intense emotions. Teachers and students constantly suffer from headaches and live in fear of everything." All participants noticed how war affected them on an emotional level.

Most participants noticed and described having hardships that triggered "aggression", "stress", "tension", "depression" "anxiety", and "fear". Many interviewees observed panic attacks in both themselves and others. Several educators noticed having "intrusive thoughts" all the time. Olena said with a sigh, "Oh, those negative emotions… You are pushing yourself. You want to scream, to cry, to let out a primal scream: накричатися - викричатися [*nakruchatysya - vykrychatysya*]. You want to put them somewhere, but sometimes it all builds up and you explode." Diana described, "People become more aggressive toward one another. Benevolence

and kindness are dulled. Valentyna added, “at home I cannot control my emotions.” After controlling their emotions all day while working with students and unable to acknowledge or express them, educators come home and often lash out at their family or friends.

Sanya shared feeling OK when people around her become aggressive, but worrying when they fall into an “anabiosis state; when they do not see any sense in life and wish to die faster.” Larysa echoed, “It’s so hard, almost impossible, to think about anything good. When I think more about the war I don’t want to live.” Nina elucidated, “Maybe I become numb. Maybe I have become cold-hearted. I am not sure. I don’t know. I experience disconnect and suspension. Because when I connect I worry about it too much.” As a psychologist, Diana commented, “I see a lot of denial as a protective mechanism. It happens in masses. People claim that they have grown used to war and that it’s not scary at all.” Although some educators can protect themselves by trying to avoid or ignore their emotions, all of them observe how war affects them on a physical plane.

Most of the participants reported having high blood pressure, issues with their stomachs, and headaches. They mentioned feeling “physically burnt out”. Tamara depicted, “I observed that I became more tired. I could do more work before war. I feel more tired, I can't. No strength is left. I am exhausted. It was harder/worse at the beginning.” A lot of the participants reported the desire of eating more than usual, “заїдати [*zajydaty,* eating away]” to deal with stress. Nadiya shared, “I eat food to deal with it. I gained weight.” Others noticed the loss of appetite. Sanya summarized, “you eat too much, or you don’t eat at all.” Unhealthy diets affected participants’ health further. Unsurprisingly, as a result, some participants noticed changes in their cognitive abilities. Nina explained, “I understand that my memory and cognitive processes changed from the beginning of the war. It’s hard for me to concentrate on certain things.” While living during

the wartime and managing their emotional, physical, and cognitive levels, educators still have to go to work and be there for students.

Serving others while living in non-occupied territories that are constantly shelled has been both a traumatic and healing experience for educators. Inna explained, "Working with small children is hard. You feel burnt out every day after work. To be able to work with children one needs to have an ability. It's very difficult to bring the children together because everyone is worried and agitated." As Nadiya depicted, "Teachers' and educators' words may be affected by anger, anxiety, and irritation, but not all the time. Educators can still bring light despite the pain and difficulties they face. We can bring a lot of good things: unity and support." Diana shared, "There are many new ideas and new projects, and it is easy to forget that it's important to maintain your own well-being." The next section describes why teaching serves as a coping mechanism for Ukrainian Educators and what other techniques they use to maintain their own well-being.

"Щоб не Плакать, Я Сміялась" [*Schob ne Plakat', Ya Smijalas',* As to not Cry, I laughed]

Ukrainian educators described what well-being means and what coping strategies they use for self-care to maintain well-being. After carefully rereading and analyzing the translated interview transcripts, with the help of thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017), I concluded that all participants reported revaluation of values after the full-scale invasion, and as a result, changed their perspective on what well-being currently means to them. Although Maslow (2013) identified "physiological needs" (p. 2) as the foundation of his hierarchy of needs, all participants emphasized the importance of "the safe" (p. 4) and "love needs" for them (p. 6). Educators characterized them as the importance of their family and friends being safe, healthy, and alive.

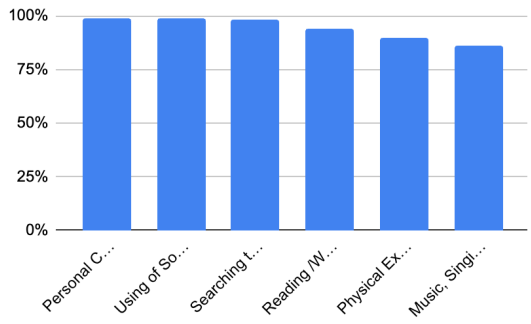
Nina described her sense of well-being, “Having electricity at least as promised, on schedule. Being able to survive the winter if it is very cold and there is no heat. Have enough food. The building where you live is not damaged or ruined. Physical health.” Her words captured what other participants expressed as well.

Coping Strategies of Educators

Ukrainian educators shared in great detail coping mechanisms they use answering the first guiding research question: What coping strategies do educators use to take care of themselves? The survey data analysis, as seen in Figure 1 below, find that the most common strategies Ukrainian educators use to maintain well-being during wartime are: personal communication (99%); use social media (99%); check the news after air raid alerts (98%); reading and writing (94%); physical exercises (90%); music (86%) (Figure 1).

Figure 7

Most Popular Coping Mechanisms Among Ukrainian Educators According to Survey



Note. According to survey results the most popular strategies teachers use for themselves. 99% use personal communications, meeting, speaking with close relatives and friends always, often or sometimes; 99% use social media always, often, or sometimes; 98% check the news after air raid alerts, always, often or sometimes; 94% use reading and writing, always, often, or sometimes; 90% use physical exercises, walking, and/or dancing, always, often or sometimes; 86% use

listening to music, singing, playing musical instrument, always, often, or sometimes

Both survey and interview data, together, point to the most popular strategy currently used by Ukrainian educators is *connection with others.* This strategy combines several strategies from the survey and interviews: *teaching*; personal communications, meeting, speaking with close relatives and friends; use of social media; checking the news after air raid alerts; and *volunteering*. Living through wartime has helped the participants realize, above all, the importance of safety, unity and connection with others.

Connection with Others as a Coping Mechanism

The thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017) of the interviews showed that connection with others works as the most popular coping mechanism for all participants. Inna explained, “Триває війна, це є травматичною подією і тому люди повинні об’єднуватися. Ніхто не мусить залишатися на самоті. [*Tryvaje vijna, tse je travmatychnoyu podiyeyu i tomu lyudy povynni ob"jednuvatysja. Nihto ne musyt' zalyshatysja na samoti.* We have war and it is a traumatic event, which is why people must unite. No one should be left alone.]” Sanya described, “Community is important. The fact that we have united has been helping us.” Nina advised, “Strengthen your social connections. Renew any lost ones, especially if you've moved to a new place or transitioned from one job to another. Remember, we are people, and we help each other.” For Ukrainian educators, the most important people they help are their students.

Connecting through Teaching

All interview participants emphasized that teaching currently serves as a coping mechanism for them. Inna described, “I believe a teacher plays an enormous role, especially now, with everything happening in the country.” This quote from the survey’s open-ended questions confirms how meaningful their work as educators is: “Відчуваю щастя і радість, коли

допомагаю іншим, проводжу консультації. *[Vidchuvaju shchastya i radist', koly dopomagaju inshym, provodzhu konsul'tatsiji.* I feel joy and happiness when I help others and provide consultations.]" During the interview, Snezhanna expressed, "If I have free time, I check the news. It's better to work than to check the news. Most of the time I work. My job is my coping mechanism." Most of the participants emphasized, "I love children, I love my job. I love to teach." Through thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017) of the raw data, the following themes illustrate what teaching currently means for Ukrainian educators.

First, teaching means *connection with students and their families.* For most participants connection means sharing smiles, hugs, joy, and love with their students. Nadiya shared, "I can not wait to go and see the children." Velentyna admitted, "Children come to hug me every day. We meet with them as close relatives." Larysa described, "You know that you connect with children when you come to school and they run to hug you. When you go home, they run to hug you and wish you a good night." Tamara explained, "Educators should be able to meet children on their level. My students hug me everyday. When they talk to me, I kneel or squat to be on their eye level." While being at the "children's level" educators treat their students during tea time.

Sharing a cup of tea, often with a few treats, is a beloved Ukrainian tradition. Most interviewed educators mentioned that they connect with their students during tea time, which they have before or after classes, during breaks, or right after air raid alerts. They bring cookies, croutons, and candies for the students, and serve them tea made in the classroom or brought from home in thermoses. Educators acknowledged that while they enjoy sharing with their students, they also feel joy when they receive something in return from the children. It could be as simple

as a drawing, a cookie, or even a smile. Most parents usually support tea times by bringing goodies to school.

All participants emphasized the importance of connecting with entire familes during this difficult time. They stressed the importance of involving parents in the educational process and explaining to them the value of discussing what is happening in school with their children. Due to online and hybrid learning, along with frequent air raid alerts during classes, students have to complete more work at home than before the full-scale invasion. Inna explained "I always work and communicate within a triangle of teacher, parent, and child. I think it's good practice. I keep parents informed about what happens at school because a child at school and at home can be two completely different persons." While the relationship between parents and students is important, teachers must support students at school no matter what.

Second, all educators in the interviews shared that, for them, teaching now means *serving and supporting children during this challenging time.* For Ukrainian educators, serving and supporting children means distracting them from the harsh realities, bringing them together, and supporting their psycho-emotional well-being. As Snezhana described, "They need me. I am there for them, smiling." Inna explained, "First and foremost I support the child. I try to understand her feelings and thoughts and help her understand them too. I know this is important to them. They see me as someone close. They trust me." Most of the interview participants shared that they are often the only people in their students' lives with whom the children can be sincere and honest. Students come to school and feel safe and supported because of the hard work of their teachers and other stakeholders.

According to participants, supporting children while helping them to be distracted from reality means creating a space where children can be engaged in various activities and develop

both cognitively and socially. Tamara shared, “They come from homes where they saw their parents scared, and they were scared themselves. They come here and we have a ‘свято’ [celebration].” Regardless of war educators organize a lot of events and celebrations for children where students can connect with one another and show their creativity. They find myriads of ways to help students stay connected. Despite the war, they try to send their students abroad or organize field trips. A lot of participants admitted that currently they have to support not only their students, but students’ parents as well if needed. Maryna shared, “Sometimes I have to support my parents when they call me.” She referred to her students’ parents as “my parents”, highlighting the emotional attachment she has to them.

Educators now understand the importance of coming to work balanced, without displaying their emotions to already traumatized students. Inna shared, “I completely forgot about my emotions at school. I try not to transfer them to the children so they do not sense them.” Larysa said, “How can I come to the children in a bad mood, feeling gloomy? I have to support my children, that’s why I cannot become despondent. We will not be able to stay healthy if we give in to despair. We have to be strong to support the army.” To support students and their families, educators need to feel supported themselves. They find this support through connections with other educators.

Third, teaching means *supporting and connecting with other educators*. Tamara highlighted, “I am so grateful to my colleagues for their support. We are our own doctors.” Maryna, Nina, Olena, and Diana mentioned the importance of weekly peer-support meetings created by project VeLa, where educators have a safe space to share their emotions and support each other. Diana explained, “These support groups are like reminders. We meet once a week and share with each other what we’ve done to take care of ourselves.” Olena felt supported at

work, "I like the culture we have created. If you want to share something, you can; if not, no one will 'dig into your soul'. Sometimes you just need to be around like-minded people to feel supported." Educators also connect with each other during the seminars and workshops they attend.

Fourth, all participants shared that teaching also means *learning* for them. They all reported that they have "learned a lot" since the beginning of the full-scale invasion and have continually taken new courses. They mentioned that they have to take classes or courses for professional development because it is required by administration and the Ministry of Education. Educators stated that they are learning new platforms, technologies, instruments, methods, and discovering new online resources. Tamara shared, **"**I've always been a learner. This habit and practice have helped me a lot. My learning and my profession as an educator helped and saved me." Inna emphasized, "We have to keep learning all the time." They continually learn something new to engage their students in class, and to better serve, teach, and understand "what is currently going on" with their students. Tamara explained, "I go and study, then I apply my knowledge in real life." Educators' own curiosity and thirst for knowledge move them to learn new things every day. They view preparation for each meeting with students as an opportunity to be creative.

For Ukrainian educators, each class is unique and cannot be repeated. As Tamara described, "I could repeat the same class or event from last year, but that feels too simple for me. I have to add something, change something, or do something. When I do that, it lights me up and inspires me." Snezhana shared, "There are prepared lessons online, but I don't like them, something is always missing. I have to improve every class. I don't take shortcuts." Keeping themselves busy by learning new things serves as a protective mechanism for teachers, helping

them stay distracted from reality.

Although teaching is a valuable coping mechanism for Ukrainian educators, it is extremely energy depleting, especially during wartime. Tamara described, “After a busy workday, I need to go home. I close the door and I'm home, with my family. That is the time I need to recharge.” To teach effectively, support children and their parents, and connect professionally with colleagues, educators need to maintain strong connections with their families and friends.

Connecting with Relatives and Friends

Sanya admitted, “My work is very important to me, but my first priority is my family...”. She added, “It is also very important to help in the community and bring together like-minded people, both adults and children.” Being with family and surrounded by like-minded people serves as a coping mechanism for educators. In the survey, 119 people responded to the Likert scale question about the frequency of personal communication, meetings, and conversations with close relatives and friends as a coping mechanism. In line with survey data analysis this coping mechanism is currently the most popular among educators. According to the responses, 53% of survey participants always communicate with families and friends; 35% often use this mechanism; 11% communicate sometime; and one percent of participants would like or plan to start communication with close families or friends.

Nina described her best coping mechanism in these words: “My coping mechanisms are my daughter’s hugs. I love to snuggle her, smell her hair, feel her, and see her smile.” Sergij described his coping mechanisms as meetings with friends, “sometimes planned, and they come over, and sometimes they just stop by.” He explained that he and his old friends try to meet once a month in a Ukrainian city they all choose. Sanya shared that, for her, personal communication

with relatives and friends means being responsible for other family members. She said, “What supports you is the fact that you are responsible for others, and you have to help them. Especially if your relatives are bedridden. You have to be strong, this responsibility helps.” Most educators shared that caring for older relatives, children, and grandchildren during wartime serves as a coping mechanism for them.

Many interview participants, like other educators, live with their parents or adult children. They meet their relatives and friends during weekends, holidays, and vacations. They check in with each other daily by phone to make sure their loved ones are safe and doing well. They also use social media to stay connected with friends and family, especially those who had to leave the country because of the war.

Connecting on Social Media

During the interview, Nina explained, **“**I use social networks only for communication, I have unsubscribed from publics of military and political nature.” All interview participants echoed her words. 119 participants responded to the survey question about using social media as a coping mechanism. All respondents answered “sometimes, often, or always”. According to their responses, 45% of participants always use social media as a coping mechanism. 41% use it often 13% of participants sometimes use social media as a coping mechanism.

Educators explained that they use social media to stay connected with their families, friends, colleagues, students and their students’ families. All participants reported having private or public Facebook pages for their classroom, group, or establishment. Participants stated that they also use Viber and Telegram as social media platfroms. All interview participants mentioned using social media to participate in professional groups of educators and/or psychologists to learn and share ideas.

In short survey responses, participants shared that they use social media as “a way”. According to them, these “ways” include “staying connected with others during the present time”, “writing personal messages”, and “reporting details about their work to parents, colleagues, and administration”. One of the responders explained, **“**I post a lot of materials related to counseling on Facebook.” Only one participant mentioned using social media as “a way to distract oneself”. Most interviewed educators reported the need to be distracted during air raid alerts and search for news afterward.

Connecting by Searching the News After Air Raid Alerts

All interview participants stated that they search for news after air raid alerts to feel a sense of control and to understand what is happening. Nadia explained, “If our air forces don’t stop them, it will fall and somewhere civilians, including children, will be killed." When a missile misses its target, checking the news becomes a coping mechanism. 119 educators responded to the questions about searching the news after air raid alerts. 51% of participants responded that they always search news after air raid alerts. 29% often use this coping mechanism. 18% responded that they sometimes search for air raid alerts. One percent responded that they are planning to start searching for air raids alerts. Two percent stated that they never search for air raid alerts.

Ukrainians check the news after air raid alerts to ensure that the anticipated loss of loved ones hasn’t turned into permanent loss. When an explosion occurred and people were killed, the news became a source of grief and added another layer of trauma. All interview participants shared that they cannot avoid keeping up with the news. Nina stated, **“**I will find out about it anyway. My coworkers or students will tell me.” Maryna confirmed, “Someone will inform you.

There is no place to hide." After all, according to the interview participants, searching for news after air raid alerts means "Knowing that your relatives and friends are safe after air raid alerts."

Two out of 12 interviewed educators stated that they do not check the news after air raid alerts. They don't want to hear about more deaths and destruction across the country. They shared, "it's stressful" and "I need to save energy". They understood that searching the news disbalances them, leaving them unable to help others.

Connecting by Volunteering

Sanya described, "I help others, but at the same time I help myself. When I think about someone being in a worse condition and that I need to help, I do not have to focus on my own condition." For participants, volunteering means "feeling like part of the community"; "helping those currently in need"; "supporting those on the frontline to bring Victory closer"; and "conducting art therapy activities with children". According to 10 of the 12 interviewed educators, volunteering with people and animals serves as a coping mechanism for them. It has been helping them to survive and maintain well-being during the traumatic wartime. They volunteer on weekends, holidays, school vacations, and after school. Inna explained, "When I take care of someone else I feel better."

While volunteering, Ukrainian educators connect with other like-minded individuals and fellow volunteers. Sanya shared, **"**One of the best coping strategies that works for me is building a community - bringing people together around what interests them. Some people make nets, some collect medications, some assist internal refugees, and others work on the logistics." All volunteer efforts are currently focused on helping those at the frontline or those in need: internal refugees or families who have lost relatives to the war.

All of them support the frontliners in a myriad of ways: net weaving, creating amulets, baking and cooking, making candles, buying clothes, and organizing fundraisings together with their students. Larysa described, “People unite and everyone helps however they can through volunteering. They made nets to cover weapons and ammunition, and rugs for the soldiers to sleep on in the trenches. The boys who went to the frontline asked for food, tea, and coffee.” Tamara shared, “We create charitable events and concerts for Valentine’s day, Christamss, where we collect goodies for the Ukrainian Military.” Nadiya described, “At our school, we opened a museum dedicated to the russian-Ukrainian war. We created exhibits with our own hands, together with the children, to show the horror of war.” They create (weave, bake, cook) together as a team.

Every educator did her best, using her knowledge and talents to help others. Nina, as a psychologist, volunteered by applying her professional expertise. She shared, “I began gathering volunteers who wanted to help as psychologists. I brought together people I knew and founded a non-profit art therapy center without any external support.” Nina brought together psychologists who offer free consultations to those in need. As a leader, she emphasized the importance of communication and reminding others or the importance of their work. She shared, “I tell them, ‘I am proud of you’, and my team replies, ‘You are the only one who tells us that, but we do everything we can. We are tired, but after your words of support, we feel like we can overcome anything.” Since the full-scale invasion, Nina and three other participants have started their own non-profit organizations, creating various ways to connect with others.

Connections can happen in different ways. One of them is through reading, where you perceive the thoughts of others. Another is through writing, where you share your thoughts with yourself or with others.

Reading and Writing as a Coping Mechanisms

One respondent experessed, “Nowadays, it is impossible to live without reading and writing.” It was not surprising to find that participants use reading and writing, as it is a fundamental part of the educators’ profession. Although 70% of survey respondents use reading or writing as a coping mechanism, there was no consensus in their description of how and why this mechanism works for them. 119 people responded to the survey question about using reading and writing as coping mechanisms. 26% of respondents always use writing or reading as a coping mechanism; 44% use these mechanisms often; 24% responded they use it sometimes; two percent hardly use reading and writing; one percent would like to use it; three percent never use reading and writing as a coping mechanism. 34 people explained their answers. Seven educators wrote about both reading and writing in the response to the survey’s open-ended question.

Interviewed and surveyed educators stated that they use reading and writing “to distract themselves”, and “as a part of professional development”. One of the survey respondents explained, “There is always something to write and something to read for work.” Six people did not specify whether they use writing or reading but explained why reading and/or writing works for them as a coping mechanism. 18 people explained why they read and write, while nine detailed what they read or write. Three people explained both what and why they read, and one person explained when she reads. Another person explained both when and why she reads. 18 respondents specifically mentioned reading as a coping mechanism.

Below I will explain why participants use reading as a coping mechanism and what it means for the survey and interview respondents. Although there was no agreement in survey and

interview responses regarding why educators use reading as a coping mechanism, several themes emerged from the data. These themes are as follows:

First, Ukrainian educators read for pleasure when they want to rest and escape from reality. Most survey and interview participants agreed that reading provides an opportunity to "distract myself" and "forget my problems for a while." One survey respondent shared, "This is the best type of relaxation, but I can only do it on vacation." Another added, **"**I love to read; it helps me relax."

Second, seven survey respondents and most interview participants stated that they read out of curiosity and a desire to learn something new, which they can then share with their students. This is a quote from one of the open survey responses: "The teaching profession requires a lot of learning and reading. My profession demands that I read." All interview participants reported that they constantly need to read something for their work. They explained that they read professional articles to improve lessons and to better understand both themselves and their students. For many participants, reading for work also meant "reading for self-development and helping others to develop". One survey respondent commented, "I need to keep learning throughout my life. I read to gain new knowledge. I am constantly learning.". Survey participants expressed the feeling that time is limited, so everything they read should contribute to their professional or personal growth.

Third, some survey participants described reading as a hobby when it involves non-fiction, but historical or archival sources to learn new facts about history. Fourth, one of the survey participants explained that she uses reading as a communication tool. Last, several interview participants identified reading as a coping mechanism, describing it as a form of bibliotherapy they use to manage their mental state. Maryna and Tamara mentioned reading

Ukrainian classics, Renaissance literature, mythology, legends, epics, and ballads, finding new meaning in these works as a therapeutic tool that helps them build resilience against stress.

Similarly, just as educators had different reasons for using reading as a coping mechanism, they also had different preferences regarding what they read. Some educators stated that they only read fiction. For example, during the interview, Nina shared "I am happy when I can read one or two pages of fiction. Not a psychology or science book because I need to write an article, but just fiction." In contrast, Inna remarked, "The first thing that helps me is reading. I love reading about psychology. It helps me unload obsessive thoughts about the war and the state of our country." Later in the interview, Inna added, "I adore reading scientific books and detective novels. Most of the time, I immerse myself in books."

Some interview participants emphasized the importance of having a physical book in their hands. Inna explained, "I cannot read on a phone or tablet," while Tamara added, "I highlight and leave bookmarks. It influences my thinking as I read." One survey participant noted, "Audiobooks are a lifesaver.", while another mentioned using social media "to read short stories and news".

The 'whens' of reading as a coping mechanism for interview and survey respondents were the following: "when there is an opportunity", "daily" "when I leave home", "on vacation", and "when I need to distract myself". Nina expressed, "I try to use every free minute for reading." Tamara stated, "I read at night, when I have my quiet time." While some educators read during most of their free time, several interviewees and three survey participants stated that they use writing as a coping mechanism. In their answers they explained why they use it and what type of writing is important for them.

One survey respondent, along with Maryna, emphasized the importance of writing to oneself as a way to “express your position” and to understand “who we are”. Two survey respondents explained the importance of keeping daily diaries to “write down notes about life”. During the interview, Diana stated, “A diary helps me develop my brain.” Additionally two survey participants mentioned that writing in cursive serves as a coping mechanism. Both explained that writing in cursive “calms them down” and “helps with concentration.” During the interviews, Diana focused on the importance of keeping a calendar, “I also have a calendar for each day where I write down my plans and what I can do to support myself.” Olena described her writing as a form of therapy that helps her release negative emotions and prevents her from transferring them to “vulnerable children”. She shared “I transfer my thoughts onto paper. If I carry my thoughts, and don’t talk about them with anyone, I can sit and start crying. It happened to me often, so I began writing them down.”

Even though sitting down to read or write serves as a coping mechanism for educators, Inna explained, **“**I do something physical when I am unable to use reading as a coping mechanism. Sometimes I cannot make myself read because of obsessive thoughts. Then I realize I'm wasting my time, so I stand up and move.”

Movement as a Coping Mechanisms

The reasons for engaging in physical exercise varied among interview and survey respondents. A total of 119 survey respondents answered the question regarding the use of physical exercise, walking, and/or dancing as a coping mechanism. 26% of participants responded that they always use physical exercises, walking, and/or dancing as a coping mechanism; 31% use this mechanism often; 30% sometimes use it; five percent hardly use this coping mechanism; three percent would like to use it; two percent never use physical exercises,

walking, and/or dancing as a coping mechanism. Additionally, 43 participants provided written explanations in response to this question.

The following categories of physical activites emerged from their responses: yoga, gym workouts, fitness exercises, biking, dancing, and walking. Walking was the most popular category. 19 surveyees along with Nina, Inna, and Nadiya, described various types of walking. Some mentioned walking in nature to experience the “wow” effect. Because Participants described walking as something that “calms” and “inspires”. Some walk with a specific purpose: such as walking a dog, or commuting to and from work, while others mentioned walking before going to sleep. Ukrainian educators also highlighted the benefits of physical exercise, referring to it as “the best form of psycho - emotional relief.” Others described it as a way to “release fatigue”, “a great way to reboot”, “relief from tension”, “a hobby”, and “a source of both pleasure and health”.

Many educators explained that they practice different forms of physical exercise to cope with stress, for enjoyment, and for emotional release. Nadiya stated, “Physical exercises help me to forget this (about reality), even if just for a little while.” Many respondents indicated that they engage in exercise to support their physical health. They described this with the following phrases, “movement extends life” and “a way to renew physical state and balance”. For some educators, physical exercise is an everyday necessity. Two survey participants stated, “I live in the village. There is no way to live in the village without physical exercise. I don't have time for dancing or anything else.” For others, their profession dictates their physical activity. Three survey participants identified as a dance teacher, one as a gymnastics coach, and one as a PE teacher. One of them commented, “I am a dance teacher; it's my lifestyle.”

Although many participants explained why they use physical movement as a coping mechanism, 11 survey participants provided reasons for not engaging in physical activities. The main barriers mentioned were a lack of time and health issues. One participant commented that she doesn't feel the need for physical exercise. While physical exercises may not be available to everyone, music is. Based on survey results, I concluded that the next most popular coping mechanism among educators is music, including singing, and playing musical instruments.

Music as a Coping Mechanism

Survey and interview respondents named various types of music they use as a coping mechanism. A total of 119 participants responded to this question. 20% percent reported that they always use music, singing, and/or playing musical instruments as a coping mechanism; while 36% use it often; 30% percent stated that they use music sometimes; 8% rarely use it; one percent expressed a desire to use music, and four percent reported never using music, singing, and/or playing instruments as a coping mechanism. 44 survey participants provided explanations for their answers, with most focusing on listening to music. Only two participants mentioned singing when gathering with friends.

Many respondents mentioned classical music, while a significant number reported using Ukrainian folk songs, nature sounds, and calming music. Several participants mentioned modern Ukrainian songs that reflect current realities and the hope for future victory. Sergij explained, "My music tastes have changed. I now prefer more relaxing music to create a certain mood". The timing of music use as a coping mechanism also varied among participants. Some reported listening to music constantly, with one stating, "I listen to music all the time. It is hard and boring without it." Others listen to music while working, walking, exercising, or doing housework such as cooking and cleaning, as well as during "morning and evening self-care

rituals", before sleep, and even in bed. Most of the participants provided explanations for why they listen to music.

Most responses described the use of music as a coping mechanism for balancing emotional health and reducing stress. Participants reported using music "to calm down", "to improve emotions", "to set a certain mood", "to receive positivity", "to be distracted from reality and bad news", "to cope with stress", "for mental relief", "for soul relief", and "щоб розвантажитися [*rozvantazhytysya,* to unload]". One respondent wrote, "Music fills me. It provides an opportunity to forget and be distracted from problems." 12 survey respondents indicated that they use music as a coping mechanism because it is part of their profession. During the interview, Sergij emphasized the importance of music for him: "I need more music. I immerse myself in different worlds, in different realities through music." While many respondents explained why music is important to them as a coping mechanism, eight participants provided reasons for not listening to music.

Three participants responded that they do not enjoy music and feel they lack a musical ear. Two respondents explained that music "triggers tears" due to their psychological state and heightened emotionality. Another two mentioned that it feels inappropriate to listen to songs during the war, citing reasons such as "people are crying" and "so many have been killed". One respondent shared that she relies on other coping methods. Below, I will discuss additional coping mechanisms commonly used by interview participants.

Other Coping Mechanisms

Even though searching news after air raid alerts helps participants to stay connected with their loved ones, the most frequently mentioned coping mechanism among interview respondents was "avoiding the news". Participants explained that they do this because "all the news is

negative", "the news affects my psycho-emotional state", "I feel bad right away", "I feel depressed", "I recall those frightening images", "I become very angry", "the information will reach me anyway", and "someone will tell me". Most participants explained that they followed the news closely at the beginning of the full-scale invasion but later realized they no longer needed to do so. Nina shared, "Avoiding traumatic events helps. I canceled all my news channel subscriptions on Telegram. I see these funerals, and I understand that if I dwell on it, I will fall apart." Maryna added, "I don't watch the news at all. When I heard about the occupation of our territory, I had nightmares about being held captive… If I listen to the news, I will not be able to smile at the children." So on the one hand educators avoid news to protect their mental well-being, but on the other hand, they recognize the need to be resourceful for their students. One of the simplest techniques that helps educators maintain their resilience is reminding themselves of the power of gratitude.

Being thankful for small things, such as having a "non-ruined house", "daily food", or "limbs" was mentioned directly or indirectly by all interview participants. Every respondent expressed gratitude for help and support they received from abroad. Sanya remarked, "The most important thing when people help you is realizing that I am not alone". Olena, a preschool psychologist, emphasized the importance of teaching children, educators, and parents to practice gratitude in everyday life. Educators expressed their gratitude to the army for the opportunity to study, live in their homes, and for being alive. Most educators highlighted the significance of regularly practicing gratitude.

Interviewed participants also emphasized the importance of maintaining routines in all aspects of their daily lives. Tamara explained, "It helped me stay balanced because I had a routine. Routine restores a sense of control". Other coping mechanisms mentioned include:

spirituality and trust in God; crying: “I finally can cry” - confessed Sanya; taking herbal stress relief medications such as Korvalol (a mix of valerian root, peppermint oil, and hop extract); traveling when and where possible, even to nearby villages, and consciously focusing on hope and awe. Nina eloquently summarized,

> Everyone seeks their own key, their own resource. Some find it in creativity. Some in spirituality, others in peer support groups. Some people believe in astrology and numerology, while others trust their friends and mentors. Some seek professional help from psychologists or psychiatrists when needed. We don’t yet know how this experience will affect us, as the long-term consequences of post traumatic stress are still not fully studied, especially when we are living through extended traumatic events. This war, in truth, has been ongoing for not just two years, but for ten.

Despite the hardships they face, Ukrainian educators continue to go to work daily, providing support to their students and other stakeholders.

How Teachers Observe Imprints of Trauma in Their Students

As educators, participants observe the impact of war not only on themselves but on their students, students’ families, students’ friends, and colleagues. The word “pain” was most frequently used by educators to characterize the students’ emotional state. Olena remarked, “Children and their families are upset and exhausted. Most fathers are either on the frontline or have died. All of this affects the children. Sometimes we have air raid alerts throughout the night, and they do not sleep at all”. Sanya emphasized, “Children are like a litmus paper. They feel everything (tears and happiness) twice as intensely as adults, and they bring all of it to us. More aggression, more joy, more dejection and despondency.” Nadiya echoed this sentiment, saying, “I worry that all my anxiety will transfer to my students. They absorb it instantly, like a sponge.”

Educators observed that older children are in “more terrible conditions” compared to younger ones. Valentyna speculated, “Perhaps this is because they perceive the war differently than younger children. They worry more. They are more anxious.” Despite their age, all Ukrainian students have been impacted by the war, albeit at different levels.

Educators reported that all current Ukrainian students over the age of five were impacted by the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, having studied online for a year and a half. Valentyna remarked, “They came back ‘ніякі’ [none] after online learning.” In September 2021, they resumed in person learning, but by February 2022, they were again shifted to online education due to the full-scale invasion. Some schools in the Eastern Region have been online since 2014, when the russian army invaded the Donetsk, Lugansk, and Crimea territories. Currently, depending on the school district, children are learning through online, hybrid, or in-person formats.

Even when studying in person, due to the air raid alerts, students often spend hours, sometimes the majority of the school day - underground. Enduring these air raid alerts, while hearing the sounds of exploding rockets and flying drones, equates to waiting for one’s own death, or that of loved ones, whether consciously or unconsciously. Valentyna explained, “Children don’t want rockets. When they stay in their homes, they can hear planes and helicopters flying overhead. They have to hide under beds or in closets, or lie down on the floor with their hands behind their heads.”

Tamara described the process of bringing her first graders underground, “They no longer panic. They know this is just how it is. They sit on small chairs, wearing all their clothes and with backpacks ready. We never know when or how the air raid alert will end.” All educators expressed concern about the impact of air raid alerts on their students' health and mental

well-being. Inna explained, “We have air raid alerts everyday. We have to stay in the cold, in damp conditions. This has exhausted the children.” Teachers also reported that teaching underground is nearly impossible due to the noise and frequent darkness.

Interviewed psychologists emphasized the importance of discussing the effects of air raid alerts on the brain with students. They explained that it is essential to reassure children that it is normal to feel scared during these alerts and to teach them healthy coping mechanisms. Unfortunately, the most commonly used coping mechanism among students, particularly older ones, is the use of gadgets. While teachers attempt to engage students underground by teaching, playing, and using therapeutic techniques, a significant number of students, particularly older ones, along with many teachers, resort to spending most of their time on phones and other gadgets during air raid alerts.

Educators have expressed concerns about parents providing gadgets to children as young as two years old. These devices often replace babysitters and serve as a means of escaping traumatic realities. Elementary school teachers have reported that, due to the use of gadgets, children as early as first grade neglect their homework and do not engage in reading at home, which was unprecedented in the past.

Sergij shared, “They play even more computer games during the night, especially during air raid alerts, as a way to escape reality. They spend more time playing games on the computer than studying. This is something new, I did not observe this before the full scale invasion.” Valentyna described the behavior of the high school students she teaches, “Gadgets, especially cell phones, dominate their entire world and space. They do not read at all. They cannot remember anything. They seem to be in shock, displaying apathy toward everything.” Educators stated that students spend most of their time on their phones, playing games “constantly”.

All educators expressed concern that, even if parents control the amount of time children spend on gadgets, they do not regulate the content children are exposed to. Children watch videos depicting dead bodies, and the torture of soldiers and civilians from both sides of the war. Many parents themselves watch such content as a distraction from air raid alerts and the various forms of loss described earlier in this chapter.

Like adults, children experience various forms of loss: the loss of their homes, non-material things, stability, joy, hope, and the loss of relatives and friends. Tamara described, "Children are severely affected by war. It may seem periodic. They appear stable, but if there is any bad news or something goes wrong, they become even more unsettled than before." Teachers observe how the war impacts their students on emotional, social, cognitive, motivational, and physical levels.

Fistly, war affects children on an emotional level. Educators noticed that students have become "more anxious". According to educators, those who were near active combat, "developed phobias." Diana stated, "There is always a moment when one of the students has a panic attack. Someone struggles with everything, while another doesn't want to do anything because they feel overwhelmed and prefer to talk about nothing." All educators reported that their students are afraid of loud noises, fearing that something has "прилетіло [flew in]". Interviewed psychologists stressed that students' emotional state is "very destabilized". Snezhana predicted, **"**This will affect children in the future. The impact will leave traces. Every child's psyche will be negatively affected. They smile, but we understand that their psycho-emotional state is compromised."

Most educators expressed that students have become more aggressive since the full-scale invasion. They correlated this with the increased level of aggression present in society as a

whole, particularly among adults, and to the widespread availability of extremely violent videos and images online. Viewing short clips or pictures of bodies torn apart has become part of the daily routine for many Ukrainians, including children as young as six years old. Olena shared, “Children have no fear. They have no bounderies. They do not feel pity. They are becoming more merciless.”

Elementary school teachers stated that playing war in a very rough way has become a norm for preschool and elementary school students, especially when adults do not intervene or redirect them. Valentyna explained, “I told them to play with robots and cars, and they did. We have so much negativity already. Maybe I am wrong, but I don’t think that it’s a good idea to nurture cruelty, brutality, and ferocity in children.” Nina (who works at the military academy) shared, “Many of my students were suspended from the institution due to psychological breakdowns or substance abuse. We see alcohol, tobacco, and drug use. We should not pretend that we don’t have this issue.” All educators noticed that children “are not frightened anymore”, but speculated that “they probably hide their fears”.

Secondly, the war affects students on a social level. Valentyna stated, “children miss communication, contact with each other, and simple friendship”. Nina described, “They don't communicate online, nor do they turn on cameras. When they see each other in person they do not know how to interact”. Because some parts of the Ukrainian Eastern Regions were wiped out from the earth to dust, some Central Regions have more internal refugees than local residents. Nina shared, “There is tension between the locals and refugees. I overheard them saying to each other in the corridor, ‘You will understand me only when it flies into your house.’” Some educators reported fights between refugees and local children, which were supported by their

parents. Olena described, “Children become callous and heartless, unsympathetic. It’s so hard for kids to say something nice to one another.”

Thirdly, the war affects children on a cognitive level. All teachers reported that students “do not have any memory” and “cannot concentrate”. Tamara worried, “Children are cognitively delayed, lagging in their imagination. As they say, trauma causes a two year regression in a child’s development. Sometimes I ask, ‘Children, repeat after me.’, but they just stare back at me. It is painful to watch”.

Most teachers responded that any academic material triggers thoughts about war. Tamara explained, “What they see at home affects them even if they do not read news on their own.” Teachers noticed that children became “less active in class”, “more tired”, “not reading”. Sergij described, “I see an impact on their academic progress. The academic level of my students has been dropping every year. Overall readiness for school is in decline.” The interviewed teachers stated that most students are no longer able to verbally express their knowledge.

Teachers, working with children younger than 10 years old, were concerned about their students' language development. All of them reported seeing children who do not use language on the level appropriate for their age. Most educators saw children of different ages who have become muted since the full-scale invasion. Although it is understandable that Ukrainians swear to express strong emotions, such as anger, frustration, and despondency (Jay and Janschewitz, 2008), all interviewed educators had concerns regarding wide use of foul language by children as young as two years old. Strong emotions affect not only students’ language, but also their motivation.

Fourthly, the war impacts children on a motivational level. All educators agreed that it is currently very difficult to motivate students of all levels, especially middle, highschool, and

higher ed students. Most educators shared that “motivation dropped dramatically” or there is “no motivation or effort at all”. Valentyna depicted, “They ask, ‘Why do we need this?’ or ‘We don’t know what will happen to us.’ It’s impossible to convince them that they are wrong.” No one knows what will happen with Ukrainians in the future, or whether they will survive physically.

Fifthly, participants stated that the war affects children on a physical level. Interviewed educators stated that children come “physically tired”. Nina described, “Everyday I see these tired children with very sad eyes.” Lack of sleep and frequently staying underground affect students’ immune systems. They become more susceptible to viruses and respiratory diseases.

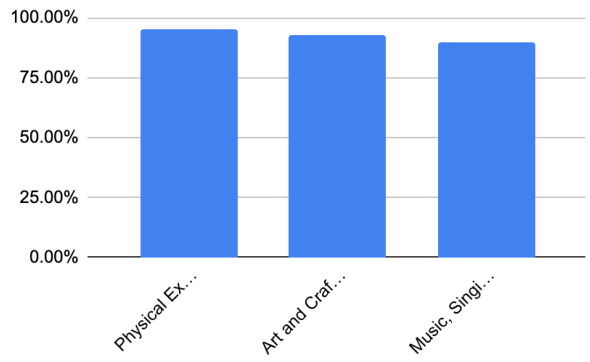
To mitigate the effects of war on their students, teachers constantly seek ways to keep them engaged and “distracted from reality”. Valentyna stated, “I try to do everything I can to prevent them from withdrawing into themselves, but I do not see that joy in children’s eyes anymore. They are not the same joyful children we had before.” In the next section, I will describe coping mechanisms that help teachers prescind children from reality and keep them distracted, especially during and after air raid alerts.

Обіймашки [*Obijmashky*, Little Hugs]

Educators use many coping strategies when working with students. This section of chapter IV describes what coping strategies Ukrainian educators use to help their students maintain well-being, answering the second guiding research question: What coping strategies do educators use with their students? After a careful analysis of the survey data, I found that the most common strategies Ukrainian educators use to maintain well-being for their students during wartime are: physical exercises (95%); art and craft projects (93%); listening to music, singing or playing a musical instrument (90%) (Figure 8).

Figure 8

Coping Mechanisms Used by Ukrainian Educators in Their Work with Students



Note. According to survey results the most popular strategies teachers use with their students. 95% of survey respondents selected always, often, or sometimes they use physical exercises, walking, and/or dancing. 93% use art and craft projects always, often, or sometimes. 90% use listening to music, singing or playing a musical instrument always, often, or sometimes.

The most important overarching theme for these strategies is support of students' artistic and physical growth. The top three strategies are interconnected. All interviewed and many surveyed educators noted in short responses the benefit of involving students in activities such as sports, martial arts, performing art, visual art, media art, literary art, craft, and others. When students participate in these activities, they also take part in different meetings, concerts, and celebrations. Sanya explained, **"**At the time of the events and festivals, children are distracted. They forget about ammunition, about rockets having exploded nearby. They communicate and connect with peers. This is very important." All interview participants mentioned incorporating various types of physical activities with their students.

Movement Strategies in Classroom

Tamara explained, “We take a break and then we continue with the lesson. I offer various exercises to stabilize students, to renew them. It is something that they can use in the future. I also use exercises for companionship and friendship in the group.” Sanya stated, **“**We use music when we organize concerts, performances, and music projects for children.” Most educators stressed that they use physical activities with their students to distract them from reality.

106 educators responded to this question in the survey. 31% of respondents indicated that they always incorporate physical exercises, walking, and/or dancing. 39% stated that they often use physical exercises in their work, while 25% checked that they sometimes use physical exercises with their students. Three percent responded that they hardly use physical exercises in their work. Two percent expressed plans to start using this technique in the future. One percent responded that they never use this coping mechanism in their work. 28 respondents provided short explanations for their answers.

All interviewed and surveyed preschool, elementary school and some middle school educators stated that they use action and movement songs in their work with children. Olena explained, “We dance and play.” Some educators memorize movement songs and dance them with children, while others use available videos from Youtube. Tamara shared that her former elementary school students, now in middle school, visit her first graders and teach them new physical movements along with songs. Some interviewed educators also mentioned the use of children poems, which students memorize and perform with accompanying movements. Maryna and Tamara reported the use of Zoo Yoga (EMPOWER, 2022) and having movement breaks with balance exercises on yoga mats. Several educators mentioned the use of exercises not only for the whole body, but for eyes and fingers.

The use of physical movements by educators varies. Some surveyed educators stated that they use them “as often as possible”, “always”, “during every class”, “at the beginning of the school day”, and “as needed”. Some participants reported allocating time for “movement breaks” during every class. Some educators respondents indicated employing physical exercises during in person meetings, others stated including them in online classes. Four survey participants and Sanya expressed the importance of using physical exercises inside bomb shelters and after exiting the bomb shelters.

While engaging in physical exercises educators distract themselves and their students, helping them to “not think about danger”. According to the participants, physical exercises help to “regulate and calm children down”, “elevate the mood”, and “take away stress”. One survey participant explained that she uses physical activities with students because she is a dance teacher, while another shared that she incorporates physical exercises with children when organizing various events.

Valentyna and Tamara reported that the administration, under the direction of the Ministry of Education, requires the use of physical exercises every 15 minutes with elementary school students. Snezhana shared, “Children miss doing exercises. They remind me to turn them on if I forget.” Some educators explained that they do not perform physical exercises if they run out of time due to air raid alerts. Even though one survey participant mentioned, “Physical exercises are the best form of support for everyone.”, many educators also find that art and craft projects are an effective coping mechanism for students at this time.

Art-based Strategies in Classroom

Art and Craft Projects are used often as a coping strategy for educators in their work with students. “Our kids are so creative because we have taught them so,” depicted Nadia. 104

participants responded to the survey question about using art and craft projects as a coping strategy in their work with students. 25% of educators indicated that they always use art and craft projects when working with children; 44% of respondents use this coping mechanism often while 24% use it sometimes when working with children; five percent responded that they hardly use physical exercises in their work, and two percent never use it. 23 respondents provided short explanations for their answers. Most interview participants mentioned the use of art and craft projects in their work at this time.

Educators incorporate different kinds of art porjects in their work. According to their responses, most educators employ visual, applied art, and craft in their work. The majority of educators specifically mentioned drawing, water paint collages, knitting, embroidery, weaving, sewing, netting, and paper art. Some participants mentioned that they introduce media art in their work, where children create videos and news segments. Some educators employ literary art by engaging students in reading and writing new poetry, short stories, and drama. One of the survey respondents explained, “We create skits and perform them with children (fairy tales in modern interpretation)”. Along with reading and creating poetry and drama, many participants use performing arts.

Students memorize poetry and plays and perform them at events and concerts. Participants responded that their students take part in “art competitions, projects, and events” on a national level, both online and in person. Children complete art and craft projects individually and in groups. Most interview participants and several survey participants mentioned the use of art therapy exercises with students such as Tree of life, Flower of Well-being, Flower of Gratitude, Water Circle of Hope, Binoculars of Hope, Zines, Cards of the Future, Gardens of Victory, Animals of Power, and others. Diana explained, “Children of all ages love art. They love

to create something and ground their hands. Through their hands they ground themselves". While completing art and craft projects, students work both individually and in groups.

The reasons for not employing art and craft projects with students varied among survey participants. One participant wrote that she wants to incorporate them at the "level of thoughts". Some educators commented that they do not have time, others that they are using other tools, while one respondent wrote that she is "not an artist".

The reasons for incorporating art and craft projects vary among educators. The most frequently mentioned reason was "to help them escape reality" and "distract them from all of these nightmares". Other rationales behind the use of art and craft with students were "to help students become more resilient", "help to concentrate and relax", "to renew emotional state", "to rest", "to raise their interest", "for students' development", "because it's required by administration", and "to help the Ukrainian Army". One of the respondents wrote,"Children love art and craft. We creatively work with children". The other noticed, "Teachers are creative people." And another added,"I love creativity." During the interview, Inna explained, "It's easier for children to draw about it than to talk about it".

Educators involve their students in art and craft activities, "during classes", "at the beginning of the school day", "during breaks", "during air raid alerts", "after air raid alerts", "after school", "on the weekends", "during school events". One of the educators described, "While children are drawing or singing they are able to prescind and feel calm." According to participants, they frequently accompany art and craft projects with music.

Engaging with Music as a Strategy

Singing, chorus, playing instruments, listening to music are all ways the Ukrainian educators incorporate music into their school day. One of the survey respondents wrote, "I love

concerts, musical performances, and singing." 102 participants responded to this survey question. 29% of educators confirmed always employing music, singing, or playing musical instruments with their students, while 38% use this mechanism often, and 23% only sometimes. Five percent of respondents hardly use music in their work, whereas five percent never resort to this coping mechanism. 14 participants explained their answers.

According to participants, they use various types of music in their work with students. In their responses educators mentioned incorporating classical, calm, joyful, folk, and patriotic music. Educators who worked with younger students mentioned providing opportunities for children to play various musical instruments when needed. Educators pointed out that they not only listen, but also sing folk and patriotic Ukrainian songs along with their students. Tamara shared that Ukrainian educators have a specific song for preschool and elementary school students that they sing together with students when they go underground. Singing this song reminds students that they are not afraid and why they should be going underground.

Many educators stated that they sing songs with their students during air raid alerts. Nadiya explained, "When we are hiding in the cellar, children sing songs to find joy." In short survey answers several participants confirmed engaging with music always, often, during classes, and during guided meditatons.

Participants mentioned several reasons for engaging with music as a coping mechanism. Participants listen to music and sing as a "grounding technique", as a "background during classes", as a "stress reduction mechanism", "to help them to concentrate", and as a game. One of the survey participants explained, "Music calms them down and teaches them to value beauty". Other educators emphasized that they find music is a "very useful" coping mechanism. Only one survey participant explained that she doesn't engage with music because she is not a

"music lover". Hopefully, those educators who do not employ music as a coping mechanism in their work know other techniques that work better for them and their students.

Other Coping Mechanisms

Most educators remarked on the importance of developing emotional intelligence in their students, regardless of age. Educators focus on students' emotional vocabulary to help children recognize their emotions. All educators noticed the presence of negative emotions in children. Inna explained, "They have very intense negative emotions. They have the right to feel these emotions." Educators make an effort to sit down with children to help them understand the reasons and the sources of their emotions. Most of the time children worry about their own safety and the safety of their loved ones. Educators employ various coping mechanisms to help children deal with negative emotions. Some encourage children to scream loudly, others provide opportunities for children to hit a pillow, and some try to talk to their students, offering them to write down stories about their feelings.

Several educators who have worked with younger students mentioned "обіймашки [*obijmashky,* little hugs]" as a coping mechanism they use with students when needed. All educators interviewed emphasized the importance of smiling to children and "the power of smile". Snezhana explained that at the beginning of the school day students read a poem that starts with, "Sit straight and smile". Nina emphasized the importance of praising students and stated that it is one of the most important coping mechanisms she applies with her students. Iryna, Olena, and Tamara stated that toy therapy is one of the best coping mechanisms in their work with preschool and elementary school students. Most educators stressed the importance of playing games with students. They also emphasized the benefits of having board games and

puzzles available for students in the classroom and underground. Frequently, children do not need an adult to facilitate games if there are students who can lead game play in a group.

Most educators working with elementary and older children highlighted the importance of nurturing leaders, "students capable of training and helping other students" and "who will change the future". Tamara stated, "They know what to do if they feel emotional disbalance, and can offer advice to one another". Sanya depicted, "Students who practice breathing exercises tell other students to breathe deeply, to do a butterfly'. It's a pleasure to watch." Maryna explained, "Children's weapon at this time is their learning, they have to learn to be able to rebuild Ukraine after war." All of the educators expressed how proud they are of their former students who are defending the country on the frontline.

Interviewed educators mentioned the role of patriotic education in their work. All of them emphasized the importance of "telling the truth" so their students know "who the enemy is" and "what they do to us". Educators display flags and maps of Ukraine to show students which territories are temporarily occupied and where military actions are taking place. Children draw pictures and write letters to soldiers on the frontline. Teachers invite their former students who are serving on the frontline to speak with their current students. All schools and educational institutions across the country celebrate various holidays with their students, such as the Day of Invincibility, Day of the Ukrainian Language, Kozaks' Day, Day of the Ukrainian military, Day of the Heavenly Hundred and many others. Holiday celebrations provide an opportunity for children and teachers to unite and build strong connections with each other.

Other coping mechanisms used by educators with their students echoed coping mechanisms used for self care: tea time, practice of gratitude, going outside and connecting with nature. Most educators interviewed mentioned having tea time with students as a coping

mechanism for both themselves and their students. Valentyna explained, **"**It's very good for their connection, for friendship. They pal up, rally, and unify when communicating with each other not only during lessons, but can talk during tea time." Educators are increasingly becoming familiar with new coping strategies to support themselves and their students during this traumatic time.

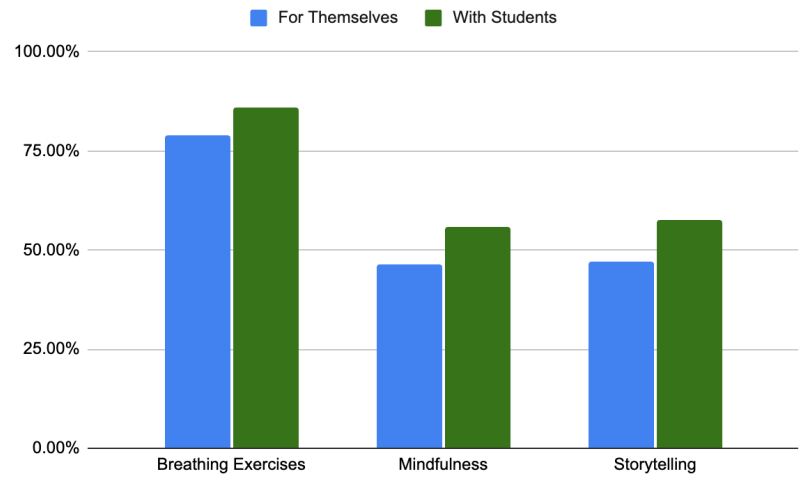
The Ukrainian educators generously shared their words, voiced their thoughts, and told their stories**.** The third question of this study asks, "How do educators perceive mindfulness and storytelling?" The next part of this chapter is answering this question and describing how educators understand and use mindfulness and storytelling in both their personal lives and their work with students. The chapter concludes by summarizing the data analysis with three, major findings: there is no universal coping mechanism; maintaining well-being amidst prolonged traumatic experiences requires sustaining connections with others; and all coping mechanisms work best when practiced mindfully.

Perplexities Around Mindfulness and Storytelling

Why did participants find it difficult to answer questions about breathing, mindfulness, meditation, and storytelling? The third guiding research question about how educators perceive mindfulness and storytelling has mixed results. Most of the survey questions regarding coping mechanisms for themselves were answered by 119 people. In contrast, only 111 answered the question about the use of storytelling and 113 people responded to the question regarding the use of mindfulness for themselves. The questions about the use of storytelling and mindfulness were followed by a question on writing and reading, to which 119 people responded. So, eight people, or 7% of respondents, avoided the question regarding storytelling, and six educators, or 5% of respondents, skipped the question regarding mindfulness (Figure 9).

Figure 9

Use of Breathing, Mindfulness, and Storytelling by Ukrainian Educators



Note. According to the survey data, 78.8% of the respondents use breathing exercises always, often, or sometimes as a coping mechanism for themselves, and 86.1% use them in their work with students. 46.6% of the respondents answered that they use mindfulness as a coping mechanism always, often, or sometimes for themselves, and 56% checked that they use it with their students. 47% of the participants use storytelling always, often, or sometimes for themselves, and 57.6% use it with their students.

The collected data indicate that educators use breathing, mindfulness, and storytelling more with their students than for themselves. One survey participant observed, “I heard a lot about breathing exercises, usually I do them together with my students in the classroom. I don't do them on my own, but I think that I should start.” Another one expressed, “I complete breathing exercises with children and that's why I do them myself.” Even though educators interviewed acknowledged that they notice a difference in their well-being when they use mindfulness techniques, meditation, and storytelling, they still tend to use these practices less for themselves. The most popular coping mechanism among breathing exercises, mindfulness,

meditation, and storytelling currently used by Ukrainian educators is breathing exercises.

Perceptions of Breathing Exercises

Breathing is an essential part of being. Breathing is a natural, continuous activity that carries a powerful, yet often overlooked, potential for healing and restoration. One of the survey participants emphasized, “Breathing exercises are the best help at this time”. Olena explained, “Even before we knew all these multiple breathing techniques, we already intuitively knew that breathing is an important part of our existence that can help us to calm down”. A total of 118 survey respondents answered the question about their personal use of breathing exercises. 10.1% of the participants responded that they always use breathing exercises; 25.3% often use breathing exercises; 43.4% use this coping mechanism sometimes. 6.1% hardly use breathing exercises. 5.1% would like or are planning to start breathing exercises; and 10.1% never use this coping strategy. Additionally, 42 people provided short answers to this question.

A total of 104 educators responded to the question regarding the use of breathing exercises with their students. 28.7% participants responded that they always use breathing exercises as a coping mechanism; *3*5.7% use this mechanism often with their students; 31.7% use it sometimes, while 5% hardly use this coping mechanism; 3% would like to use it, and 5.9% never use breathing exercises as a coping mechanism with their students. Additionally, 20 participants provided written explanations in response to this question.

The reasoning behind the use of breathing as a coping mechanism for themselves varied among educators. Survey respondents mentioned that they use breathing to “improve health”, to “support wellness and well-being”, “to stay in resource”, “to have enough energy for everything”, “to help oneself and others”, “receive information”, “self-regulation” and “self-reflect”. Three survey respondents stated, “Breathing exercises are useful and bring relief”.

One of the survey participants indicated that she uses breathing exercises “To calm myself down to be able to work with children”.

At the same, based on the survey and interview data, I concluded that the arguments for using this mechanism personally and with students were very similar. According to the participants, breathing exercises help them and their students to “calm down”, “deal with anxiety, and panic attacks”, “deal with stress”, and “to control emotional explosions”. Many survey participants and all interview participants who mentioned breathing exercises emphasized the benefits of breathing on their own and their students’ psycho-emotional state. One of the survey participants highlighted, “Anxiety, since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, became almost a norm. That's why I have to balance myself at least with breathing exercises.”

Educators emphasized that they use breathing exercises themselves and together with their students “in the class”, “during morning circles”, “when children are too excited or adjitated”, and “during and after explosions”. Inna described, “During air raid alerts we are in shelters. There we try to exhale and calm down”.

For themselves, participants use breathing exercises “as a part of meditation and spiritual practices”, “at home when starting to scream at family members”, “when I feel that I am losing my memory”, “before going to bed”, and “all the time”. One of the survey participants explained, “I use breathing exercises after shellings, receiving frightening news, failed goals, or when things are not going as planned”. Survey participants explained that once children learn and understand the benefits of breathing exercises, they not only start using this technique themselves when needed, but teach their family members and friends to do so as well. The most popular mentioned breathing exercises were square breathing, triangle breathing, palm breathing, and flower breathing.

Many educators, in their survey responses and interviews, named various methods of combining breathing exercises with different forms of art and physical exercises. They reported using “breathing and drawing”, “breathing and sand therapy”, and “breathing with music-word accompaniment.”. Singing and wind instrument teachers stated that they use breathing exercises to prepare children for classes as a part of their everyday routine. Several survey participants noted that they incorporate breathing exercises during physical activities. Physical Education teachers explained that it is impossible to perform any physical exercises without proper breathing.

Although breathing exercises are recognized as effective and beneficial, some educators explained why or when they are unable to use them. Maryna shared, “It’s hard to teach breathing and other healthy exercises to teenagers because they are skeptics.” One of the survey participants explained, “This is a personal and subjective matter. For some, it causes only the strongest negative reaction, so it is inappropriate to use it with children without their parents' initiative.” Other survey participants explained that they do not use breathing exercises because they “don’t have time”, “don’t need it”, “using other methods”, and “because breathing exercises don't work for me”. Olena shared, “I feel that we are stumbling. The other day one of the teachers shared with me, ‘I cannot breathe anymore. I am sick of breathing.’ We are fed up with those breathing exercises. Children are fed up as well”.

At the same time Olena confessed that the only thing that consistently helps her during this period is “To sit down in a quiet space. Breathe deeply while gathering my thoughts. Inhale and exhale. Don’t talk to anyone. Sort my thoughts on shelves. Realize what information does not fit me. Digest it and then go back to work”. In this description Olena portrayed breathing exercise as a part of a mindfulness practice.

Perceptions of Mindfulness

Some of the interviewed educators incorporate mindfulness into their daily routines and in their work with students. Sanya shared, "I use the following mindfulness practices to deal with stress: square breathing, five things (what you see, what you hear, what you smell, what you touch, and what you taste), and looking around and seeing different colors." Even though breathing is a part of mindfulness, fewer educators indicated in their survey responses that they use mindfulness. It is possible that only half of the interview participants heard about mindfulness before taking the survey. Three participants learned what mindfulness is from the internet after taking the survey, one was unsure what mindfulness was, and another stated never hearing the term before.

Mindfulness for Educators and Its Use with Students as a Coping Mechanism

Nina stated during the interview, "I understand that stress will catch me anyway. So it's better to deal with it now. I stand up. I inhale and exhale deeply. I drink coffee and smell it. I go outside and look around trying to find beauty". Sanya responded that practicing mindfulness helped her understand what she can do for her family and at work, as well as "to accept everything that I cannot change." Some survey respondents who provided explanations for their answers stated that they use mindfulness practices at work with children, parents, and colleagues.

A total of 113 participants responded to the question regarding their personal use of mindfulness. 2% of educators answered that they always use mindfulness; 13.1% checked that they use this coping mechanism often; 31.3% sometimes use mindfulness for themselves, 20.2% responded that they hardly use it; 6.1% would like to start or are planning to use mindfulness, and 27.3% never use it. 27 people provided explanations for their answers.

Educators explained that they use mindfulness for “calming down”, “dealing with stress”, “dealing with anxiety”, “support”, and “developing relationships with others”. One of the survey respondents explained, “Mindfulness helps me to better control myself at the given moment; keep my anxiety within normal limits; and get rid of uncontrollable actions”..

A total of 100 respondents answered the question regarding the use of mindfulness with students. 6% of participants reported that they always use mindfulness; 21% indicated they use it often; 29% said they use it sometimes; 17% rarely use mindfulness with students; 5% would like to start or plan to use it; and 22% stated they never use mindfulness in their work. Additionally, 11 survey participants wrote explanations for their answers.

Survey and interview participants responded that they use mindfulness with students to help children “concentrate on academic work”, “deal with stress”, “understand their thoughts”, and “realize meaning and form values”. Tamara described, “Practice of mindfulness helps children to understand their physical needs. With the help of mindfulness they understand that it's important to learn, to listen, to be fully present at school”. Educators admitted that it is easier to teach mindfulness to elementary school children than teenagers.

One respondent remarked, “Mindfulness is an annoying fashionable trend and a borrowed concept. Of course, I know how to manage stress, but what's the point of mindfulness here?” Another stated, “Any activity that involves performing exercises according to a certain algorithm is irritating because it’s hard to concentrate.” Nine out 11 survey respondents explained why they do not use mindfulness. Additional reasons were “I don’t use it.”, “I am not interested.”, “I don’t have time.”, “I don’t know what it is.”, and “I am not familiar with this method”.

How Educators Define Mindfulness

Survey participants described mindfulness as a "self-improving", "self-controlling", and "self-observing" mechanism. Six out of twelve interview participants explained how they perceive mindfulness. Most educators described mindfulness as a practice that helps them "to be here and now", "understand feelings, emotions, and body", "way to control emotions", "observe and sort one's thoughts", and "to know what I can do to make myself comfortable in a given moment". Sanya shared that although Ukrainian psychologists have been aware of this practice since the 1970s, it was rarely used, even by professionals in the field. She first learned about this practice through the VeLa project in Ukraine. She explained, "Mindfulness is an awareness of oneself in this world and in the Universe. Mindfulness helps me to see my attitude toward other people, toward my life, and toward my environment. It helps me to understand my mission."

For Sergij, mindfulness is "a technique that helps a person become more concious, first of all". Tamara explained, "Mindfulness is a technique that helps me to understand myself". Diana stated, "Mindfulness for me is an everyday tool for taking care of my mental health. Mindfulness is a cognitively oriented therapy that helps us become more effective, productive, aware and conscious". Nadiya shared, "While practicing mindfulness, we can control ourselves better in a given moment. Because of mindfulness we can keep our worries within the norm, get rid of uncontrolled actions and bad habits". Maryna stated, "Mindfulness is about focusing on what I have. For example, I can concentrate on my body. While practicing mindfulness, I learn how to find joy in the moment. I try not to regret anything, especially on material level." For the educators who used mindfulness as a coping mechanism, it became a highly effective strategy during this difficult time.

Intentionally practicing breathing and gratitude are also key components of mindfulness practice. Recognizing that mindfulness is a form of mediation, I realized that some educators go deeper with their mindfulness practice: they meditate.

Meditation as a Coping Mechanism for Educators

One of the survey participants wrote, “Meditation, for me, is a time when I close my eyes and visualize moments that bring me joy.” Inna explained, “Reading, for me, is a form of meditation”. 119 respondents answered the question regarding use of meditation as a coping mechanism for themselves. 3% of educators stated that they always use meditation as a coping mechanism; 11% responded that they meditate often; 29% meditate sometime; 13% of participants would like to start meditating; 31% never use meditation as a coping mechanism.

Educators’ reasoning for using mediation as a coping mechanism was similar to their reasoning for using mindfulness. In an open survey response they stated that they use meditation “to calm down”, “to relax”, “to deal with stress, anxiety, and panic attacks”. Some educators explained that they use meditation “to improve concentration”, “for self-knowledge”, “to find harmony and fulfill oneself”.

Most educators mentioned the use of guided meditations for themselves and in work with their students. They explained that it’s hard for them to meditate on their own because of intrusive thoughts, but guided meditations help them. They use recorded guided meditations before sleep and at work with children. Sanya stated that when she practiced guided meditations, they helped her with headache and physical pain. Guided meditations are stories that help practitioners intentionally move toward better realities. Storytelling is another coping mechanism used by Ukrainian educators.

Perceptions of Storytelling

From the interview data, I concluded that educators frequently use storytelling as a coping mechanism for themselves and with their students, often without realizing it. Maryna shared, “I use storytelling all the time, in my personal and professional life. For example, stories about my students are helping my brother on the frontline to find a meaning in his life”. According to survey and interview data, educators use more storytelling in their work with students than for themselves.

Storytelling for Educators and Its Use With Students as a Coping Mechanism

Respondents indicated that they use storytelling “when I need it”, “when I have free time”, and “when I have a person next to me with whom I can share my story”. Many participants stated that they share stories about themselves and their work on social media. 111 survey respondents answered the question regarding storytelling as a coping mechanism for themselves. 3% of respondents always use storytelling as a coping mechanism. 17% of educators use it often; 27% sometimes employ storytelling, 16% hardly ever use it; 4% would like to start using it, and 33% have never used this coping mechanism. In addition, 28 educators explained their answers.

Most survey participants explained that, for them, reading books and looking at narratives from a new perspective is a part of storytelling. Educators noticed that reading Ukrainian literature that was forbidden or hidden promoted better understanding of their national identites. Maryna described, “I find sense in old Ukrainian stories. I can see that we are a nation. We have literature. I know what russians have given to us and why.” Several survey and interview participants stated that writing down their stories on paper or typing them on the computer or phone helped them reflect on their narratives and gave them the ability to reshape their stories.

A total of 99 respondents answered the question regarding the use of storytelling as a coping mechanism with their students. 7.1% of participants responded that they always use storytelling in their work with students; 21.2% use it often. 29.3% of educators employ storytelling sometimes, while 13.1% hardly use it, 5.1% would like to start using it, and 24.2% have never used this coping mechanism. Additionally, 12 educators provided explanations for their answers.

Surveyed educators described using stories with students as a "learning method" and called it a "professional necessity". Nine out of 12 surveyed participants explained that they use this coping strategy because they "work with children". Educators responded that they use storytelling because "they deliver material through stories", "want to rethink significant events", "actively manage our page on social media", "teenagers love to invent stories and act them out", "it's a great tool for speech development", "storytelling elevates the mood and helps develop resilient habits".

Ukrainian educators use stories in various ways during the educational process. Most of them use moralizing stories that explain to students what is good and what is evil. They use stories as parables from classical literature, from contemporary authors, from social media, or make them up for specific children or cirumstances. Tamara described, "In my classroom I tell stories based on hypothetical cases. For example: 'There was someone, and something happened in the class with her. She acted a certain way, and here is the result'. I cannot point fingers or say that someone was wrong at that moment, but I can tell the story". While telling these types of stories, teachers help children understand what they should do and what they should not.

Educators stated that they use stories "in a classroom", "before, during, and after air raid alerts", "when I understand that students are stressed", and "all the time". While telling their

stories, educators guide children on how they should behave. Educators shared that, for them, storytelling is not only about telling stories to students but also helping students create their own stories. Stories may be real or fictional, but all of them help to better understand reality and heal the wounds from the past. Larysa stated that she doesn't know anything about storytelling, but shared, "We talk to distract each other. They tell others about themselves. I tell them about myself". Storytelling helps students to find faith and hope in the future as well as share their narratives about the present.

All educators shared that they use stories to divert students. Larysa explained, "I tell and read stories to students that calm them down. We have books with collections of stories, novels, poems and fairy tales. I use old short stories so they can understand them fast and refocus".

All interviewed educators emphasized that they share many inspiring stories from the army with their students as an educational tool, providing examples of friendship, courage, and bravery. Maryna stated, "I instill words about Victory in my Ukrainian language assignments, such as: complete the sentence, find the ending, change the word …" Most of the participants mentioned that they invite active soldiers (relatives of current students or school graduates) into the classroom to share their stories about the frontline with children, so children "know the truth". While sharing their stories, soldiers emphasize the importance of studying and how what they learned in school helped them in the fight against the enemy.

Participants emphasized that storytelling develops "thinking", "intellect", "thoughts", and "emotions" in their students. Maryna described, "Storytelling helps development of critical thinking. While using this method in the classroom I ask children to create stories with happy endings. While using their imagination children invent and create new tales". Most of the interviewed educators shared that they create stories about victory and the end of the war

together with the children. This practice helps students as well as teachers recognize their national identity.

Educators combine story creation in their work with students with calming or classical music, drawing (which becomes an art therapy practice), snow therapy, toy therapy, or sand therapy. While coupling storytelling with other techniques educators calm students down. While changing students' feelings and emotions with the use of art and music teachers change students' stories as well. Practicing storytelling helps educators to create stories about the technique itself.

How Educators Define Storytelling

While sharing her perspective on storytelling, Tamara shared, "For me, storytelling is the process of telling a coherent story about oneself. The story needs to have a beginning, a middle, and an end". In short survey responses and during interviews, educators stated that storytelling, for them, means "sharing my stories with others", "sharing someone's story to help a person to find an answer", "explaining what is happening now and what led up to it", and "telling emotional stories". Maryna described, "While using this method people go through difficult emotions and feelings and find new meaning in their experiences. While using storytelling, people add something to their memories and realize that there is a way out of any situation".

Sergij shared, "For me, storytelling is a way to concentrate on my perceptions, feelings, emotions, hardships and put them into a story that I can share with others". Sanya stated, "Storytelling helps to normalize what has happened and explains how a person can deal with it, cope with it. Sharing stories helps people realize that they are not alone and that what they are experiencing has happened to others before." Diana explained, "Storytelling is a process of creating and telling stories with the purpose of improving them". Storytelling is perceived differently by different educators and can be used together with mindfulness.

Major Findings

After analyzing results and conclusions derived from the survey and interview data, three major findings emerged. To begin with, there is no coping mechanism that works always, everywhere and for everyone. Next, maintaining well-being amidst prolonged traumatic experiences requires educators to sustain connections with others. Furthermore, any and all coping mechanisms work best when practiced mindfully.

Finding 1: There is No Cut and Dry Answer

Firstly, there is no single coping mechanism that works for everyone. Participants indicated that they employ different coping strategies depending on the situation. While some survey respondents shared that they rely on music consistently, others expressed that they could not imagine listening to music amidst the devastating realities of war in their country. Similarly, some participants reported walking and spending time outdoors daily, whereas others noted that they lacked the time to engage in such activities.

Some coping mechanisms are more effective than others for different individuals. Sergij uses dancing as a coping mechanism, while Inna reads books. Larysa relies on embroidery and knitting, and Nadiya achieves a sense of peace through creating papercraft art pieces. Participants also highlighted that different coping mechanisms work in different situations.

All participants feel confident in their ability to discern when and which coping mechanisms are appropriate to use. For example, Sanya shared that she employs breathing techniques during panic attacks but walks to and from work to calm her thoughts. Similarly, Nina watches movies to distract herself, but opts for a hot shower or bath, when possible, to achieve a sense of calm.

Furthermore, participants acknowledged that they often use coping mechanisms with their students that differ from those they use in their personal lives. Valentyna and Maryna explained that while they may sometimes be emotional and raise their voices at family members, they rely on smiles and hugs as coping strategies when interacting with children. Valentyna emphasized, “Because children deserve only love and joy at this time”. Similarly Olena observed that, although she doesn’t do any craft projects at home, she always incorporates creativity into her work with students. Tamara, who described her best coping strategy as staying alone or spending time exclusively with her family after work, actively fosters socializing and connection among her students.

Finding 2: Connection With Others is Critical

Secondly, the data indicate that the most important coping mechanism, used by nearly all participants in the survey and all interview participants, is connection with others. When the shadow of death looms so closely and can claim anyone regardless of age, the sense of connection in a given moment with loved ones becomes profoundly valuable. Nina, who shared that her best coping mechanism is her daughter's hugs explained, “I look at my daughter and I understand that I have to be strong and concious. I know that one of us, or both, could be killed at any time.”

In just a few moments during the interviews did participants describe negativity and sorrow are taking over and the need to sever ties with those who appear indifferent, lack understanding, or hold opposing views about the war. The reality of war, marked by the proximity of death due to air raid alerts, rockets, shellings, and loss of thousands (perhaps millions) of lives - serves as a reminder of the fragility of physical existence. This is why the

connections with dear family members and friends become closer and more vital than ever before. Nina emphasized, “It’s our war, and if we unite, we can win.”

Participants expressed how much they value phone calls, Zoom meetings, text messages, and most importantly, in-person interactions with loved ones. Snezhana shared, “I smile at my students during online classes because I know that I might never see them again after the next air raid alert. I am so happy when all of them are able to log in afterward.” The realities of war help participants to be mindful about their connection with others, making them aware of the temporary nature of these relationships. Being more mindful while living during wartime also helps participants in their practice of coping mechanisms.

Finding 3: Coping Mechanisms and Mindfulness

During the interview Nadia shared, “Since the full-scale invasion, I need soothing pills all the time. The only time when I calm down without pills is when I do papercraft.” From the interview data, it became evident that many Ukrainian educators practice mindfulness for themselves and with their students without being consciously aware of it. For example, visual and craft teachers help children stay in the moment while creating their own masterpieces - whether knitting, or embroidering, or drawing what they observe in the current moment.

Performing arts and music teachers incorporate mindfulness into their teaching as students learn their pieces and perform on stage. For example, during tea time with children, they encourage mindfulness by asking students to focus on the tea’s temperature and taste. When developing children’s emotional intelligence, educators guide students to become mindful of their emotions. Those educators who practice mindfulness personally and with their students, recognize its positive impact.

On the other hand, prolonged exposure to trauma can entangle one's personal story in negativity so deeply that it feels impossible to escape. This is why some coping mechanisms may not work for individuals who have experienced trauma. For instance, Sanya and Snezhana explained that meditation is ineffective for them because it increases their anxiety. This happens because during meditation their focus turns to their thoughts, which are currently dominated by the harsh realities of war. As a result, meditating on these distressing thoughts causes more harm than good. Only if individuals can intentionally redirect their thoughts during practice, can their meditation benefit them (Patanjali, 2012).

Using Nadia's example, coping mechanisms are effective only when the practitioner engages in an activity not only physically, but also mentally and emotionally. Activities that demand a high level of concentration work the best because they leave little room for extraneous thoughts to intrude. This is why, as Larysa explained, embroidering pictures or knitting with complex patterns works so well for her students. If their thoughts begin to wander, they make mistakes in the pattern and must restart their work. According to all interview participants, when exposed to prolonged trauma, coping mechanisms are successful only if they either help the practitioner detach from reality, or foster complete concentration on the present moment.

Living in trauma requires the ability to do all exercises mindfully while acknowledging, accepting, and analyzing one's storytelling. Understanding one's storytelling in the present moment allows practitioners to articulate their experiences, take ownership of their reality, and make informed choices.

“Щоб не Було — Вистоїмо [Schob ne Bulo — Vystoimo,

No Matter What — We Will Persevere]”

To effectively manage their emotions at work, the educators in this study discuss the need to find time throughout the day to acknowledge their thoughts and feelings and to decide how they can handle their emotions and maintain balance. Sergij stated, “Before the beginning of the full-scale invasion I was different. I worked all the time. I realized that if I continue, I will not be able to work and live. I understood the importance of being able to balance resources”. Nina emphasized, **“**I understand that I have to be strong and concious. If anything happens, I cannot go down to a child’s level. This is why I have to be resourceful. I need to find time to practice self-care”. One needs resources to be resourceful.

Most of the interviewed educators highlighted the importance of self-care, giving oneself space to be alone or with close family members. Tamara stressed, “It’s so important to understand myself and allow myself to do what I want, at least in the evenings”. Educators who reported allowing themselves to use various healthy coping strategies were optimistic, able to see beauty around them, even during the traumatic wartime, had hope, and were able to find meaning in life. These educators are able to serve and support children with a smile and intention to nurture them into better human beings.

These educators find meaning in teaching and help children discover meaning in their own lives by practicing gratitude for what they have. These educators connect with others and teach their students to do the same. They teach students to think critically using reading and writing as a tool, engage in physical exercises both personally and with students, incorporate various forms of art into their daily lives and educational practices, regardless of the subject they teach, and they use music as a coping mechanism both to maintain their own well-being and that

of their students . These educators constantly grow and learn. They deeply care about not only academics, but about their students' physical and psychological health. They are able to captivate and be captivated by what they are doing in a given moment, without realizing they are practicing mindfulness. These educators have enlightening stories for any occasion. They are resilient.

All interviewed participants noticed that since the full scale invasion they became more resilient. Olena explained, "We (Ukrainians) are very stress resistant. We adapt faster than other nations to life circumstances because of our history. At the beginning of the war, we were in severe shock, but we quickly pulled ourselves together." They reported that they currently experience less stress on a domestic level because they face "something more horrible every day".

While enduring the hardships of war, they have gained a deeper understanding of their identities, who they are, and their purpose in life. Inna stressed, "I look differently, more consciously at my country now. I started to think and analyze our country's history only after the full scale invasion. Because of war I became a conscious citizen of Ukraine". Maryna stated, "We are strong; we are powerful; we are an old, one nation". By embracing patriotism, teachers help their students to do the same. Nadiya captured, "I believe that Ukrainians, as a nation, will survive. We call our students little patriots of a great country. War made our children strong, patriotic, brave, resistant, and resilient." Maryna highlighted, "We must focus on patriotic education and instill it from the cradle. No matter what happens, children should always understand that they are Ukrainians. They need to remember that we are an unbreakable nation."

The process of building resilience is often painful. Snezhanna stated, "You tame this pain. You move forward. We continue to live. We continue to breathe this air. We take our chances. We

made our choices. We decided to stay here and live in our country”**.** Nina, as a psychologist, explained, “Через біль, буде зцілення. Без ретравматизації не обійтись. [*Cherez bil', bude ztsilennya. Bez retravmatyzatsiji ne obijtys'.* The healing will come through pain. We cannot avoid retraumatization]". Despite all circumstances they are adapting and surviving. Tamara shared, “I understood that I have to hold on. The marathon continues. I think my body is adjusted and adapted to war. I have less expectations for myself”. Larysa confessed, “Several months after the full-scale invasion I realized that I have to live!”. While living in constant proximity to death, they have come to value each day even more.

They are not only surviving, but learning how to maintain well-being. They know that no matter what happens, they have to keep moving as long as they are alive. They acknowledge that what they are doing is hard, but they know they have to remain strong and happy. Nina depicted, “Happiness is in simple things. Most important for us now is to survive, and seek and replenish our resources. Try to find more resources”. If they know how to maintain their own well-being, they can help their students do the same. Sanya stated, “Children come to us to receive happiness. Teachers understand they need to give happiness… Only happy people can give happiness.” Snezhana depicted, “I wanted them to feel safe inside, to help them navigate internal settings. I want them to understand what is going on, but at the same time have less worries, less disturbances, and agitation”. All of the interviewed educators understand that, to feel secure, they must support “boys on the frontline”. They do this in various ways and actively involve their students.

Sanya explained, “We cannot lament, wail, and weep. We have to unite. We have to survive. We have to support each other. We have to learn how to win. We have to support the frontline”. Velentyna assured, “Every child should contribute in their own way. They can pray,

write or draw letters to soldiers, make toys, to sell and donate to the frontline. They can perform and raise funds for the frontline." Larysa expressed, "We have to fight somehow. We have to win. We have to stay strong to be able to help the boys on the frontline."

Sanya emphasized, "As soon as you understand your life purpose, everything becomes very simple. You understand that you are needed exactly here, in this position. You know that you always have a choice. You understand that you choose this path." During this time, all of the interviewed Ukrainian educators have found meaning in helping and serving others through education. Ultimately, being there for others and caring for them has become the most important and effective coping mechanism for these educators. Many educators combine the use of coping mechanisms mentioned above with mindfulness and storytelling techinques.

Summary

Employing mindfulness and storytelling techniques, both separately and together, enables educators to become observers of their emotions, acknowledge them, and change them. These techniques can help educators connect with others, enhance their social skills, and realize their capacity to transform their lives by mindfully observing and reframing their stories. By practicing mindfulness and storytelling, educators become more attuned to their own stories and the stories of their students, foster connections with stakeholders, and improve the educational process. All these practices promote well-being on multiple levels, helping educators cultivate greater acceptance, gratitude, resilience, compassion, optimism, and happiness. However, it is important to emphasize that while mindfulness and storytelling techniques are effective, meaningful changes on both personal and classroom levels will take time and consistent effort.

There are many effective coping mechanisms to support personal well-being and caregiving, but there is no universal coping mechanism. Vianna Stibal (2009) emphasized, "It is

our trusted responsibility as parents, grandparents, teachers, caregivers and health practitioners to nurture these magnificent and tender spirits with love and understanding" (p. 256). By referring to children as "magnificent and tender spirits", she underscores the importance of mindfulness in recognizing that we influence students not only through our lectures but also through our presence and actions.

Connection with others as a coping mechanism is critical for educators to maintain their well-being. From Senge et al.'s (2000) point of view, real improvement in education is possible when everyone involved in the process is willing to change, collaborate, and improve themselves while assisting others.

So, what truly matters is not what happens to us externally, but what occurs within us internally. Coping mechanisms are effective when they are done mindfully, with full participation in the activity — physically, mentally, and emotionally. Our approach to working with students needs to be mindful.

The stories of Ukrainian educators share critical strategies of connection, mindful and purposeful engagement, and messages of hope. This research can serve all educators and professionals in helping fields gain a deeper understanding of well-being. The coping mechanisms that support Ukrainian educatos and their students can serve as an example for educators worldwide on how to manage stress and trauma effectively.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

> Adopt responsibility for your own well-being, try to put your family together, try to serve your community, try to seek eternal truth... That's the sort of thing that can ground you in your life, enough so that you can withstand the difficulty of life. — Jordan Peterson

If we believe that maintaining well-being is within our control, we can find healthy ways to cope with circumstances beyond our control while focusing on those we can influence. The subject of well-being is a philosophical question that has been explored by many educators, psychologists, leaders, and others in helping professions. Well-being may be influenced by an individual's perception of the term and defined differently across diverse populations. However, there are universal characteristics of well-being that can be understood by all humans. For example, Maslow (2013), in A Theory of Human Motivation, classified well-being as a fulfillment of physiological needs, the need for safety, a sense of belonging and connection with others, as well as the need for self-confidence and self-actualization.

Maintaining well-being, particularly for educators, is the focus of this phenomenal study. Over the past three years of working closely with Ukrainian educators living amidst war, I have come to realize that educators' well-being is a vital component of the well-being of society as a whole. While teaching, educators influence not only their students but also the students' families, both verbally and non-verbally. Therefore, educators' well-being affects not just them, but their students and other stakeholders. In the context of wartime, an educator may excel as a scientist, however, without self-care, without a clear understanding of her emotional and mental state, she risks transferring her personal trauma to her students before even teaching the subject matter.

The purpose of this study was to understand what coping strategies Ukrainian Educators use to maintain well-being during prolonged traumatic experiences. The research was based on

the stories of Ukrainian educators living in non-occupied territories during wartime. There is valuable insight to be gained from educators that lived and taught during this challenging period. The feedback provided by these individuals serves as an important resource for educators dealing with personal trauma and working with traumatized students. Guiding the research was the central question: What experiences of maintaining well-being (if any) are Ukrainian educators having, despite living through prolonged traumas associated with wartime? To answer this central question, the following sub questions were posed:

GRQ1: What coping strategies do educators use to take care of themselves? How do they describe these strategies?

GRQ2:What coping strategies do educators use with their students? How do they describe these strategies?

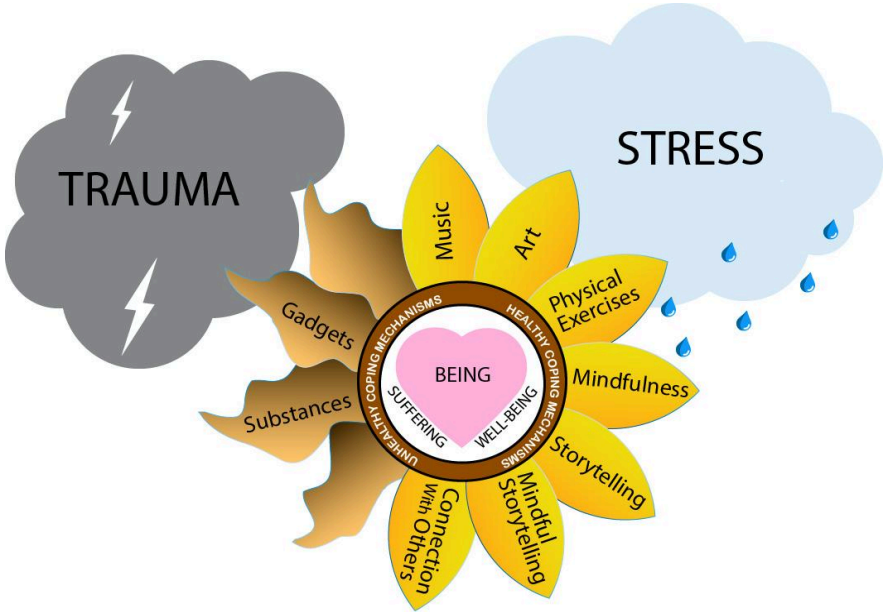
GRQ3: How do educators perceive mindfulness and storytelling?

To answer these questions the study began with a review of the literature. The scholarship that supports this study can be organized with a conceptual framework developed and examined the bodies of literature that informed the guiding research questions.

Referring to the conceptual framework (Figure 10), the following key concepts emerged for the literature review: being, suffering, surviving, well-being, stress, trauma, and coping mechanisms. The first concept explored was the understanding of being as a form of existence. As long as a person is alive, she experiences a state of being (Tolle, 2004). However, being physically present and being mentally present are not always the same state. People are often unable to be mentally and physically present at the same place. They either reminisce about the past or construct scenarios about the future (Hawley, 2001; Patanjali, 2012; and Rogers, 1980).

Figure 10

Conceptual Framework



Note. The heart in the center symbolizes a person's life, or being, that may be experienced as states of suffering or well-being. The balance of stress, trauma, and coping mechanisms determines what state is experienced. The petals on the flower represent various coping mechanisms. The yellow petals indicate healthy coping mechanisms, while the brown ones represent unhealthy ones. Some brown petals have been left empty on purpose to show that certain healthy coping mechanisms can become unhealthy, depending on how they are used by individuals. Raindrops symbolize events that can frequently trigger stress. Lightning in a dark cloud symbolizes traumatic events.

Depending on the thoughts individuals focus on (whether related to past, present, or future), they experience either a state of suffering or well-being. The use of certain coping mechanisms can determine whether a person maintains well-being or prolongs suffering (van der Kolk, 2015). Healthy coping mechanisms sustain well-being, while unhealthy coping mechanisms prompt suffering (Kanojia, 2023). Every day of human existence is always

accompanied by stress, varying in intensity (Chödrön, 2018; National Institute of Mental Health, n.d.; Sylvester, 1995; Treleaven, 2018; and Tyson & Pongruengphant, 2007).

Stress and trauma are aspects of human existance. Stress and traumatic events may affect individuals positively or negatively, depending on the person's storytelling that explains how trauma and stress influence her being. Stress has the potential to either harm or benefit an individual, while trauma may develop into either Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2022) or Posttraumatic Growth (Boulder Crest Foundation, 2024). People who endure and navigate traumatic events become survivors. How individuals in a state of surviving experience their being, and the coping mechanisms they employ in the present, have significant effects not only on themselves but also on those around them and their descendants.

Even though there is no one coping mechanism that works everywhere, all the time, and for everyone, there are some universal healthy coping mechanisms that work. There are three types of coping mechanisms: task-oriented, emotion-oriented, and avoidance-oriented coping. Task-oriented and emotion-oriented coping mechanisms are regarded as the most socially accepted in contemporary society due to their proactive nature. These strategies focus on addressing and changing stressful conditions, whereas avoidance-oriented coping strategies tend to delay or ignore the issue at hand.

The literature highlights coping mechanisms educators can use to maintain their own well-being while also understanding what coping strategies they can teach to their students (Higgins & Endler, 1995; Lambert, 2004; and Nwoko, 2024). Knowing effective coping mechanisms is vital for those living in the midst of trauma or those who have been exposed to trauma. Coping mechanisms such as mindfulness, meditation, connection with oneself and others, reading and writing as forms of storytelling, creativity (through art and music), and

physical movement are particularly suitable for supporting educators and their students during and after traumatic times (van der Kolk, 2015).

This research was a qualitative study employing a phenomenological approach. An anonymous survey was completed by 163 educators living in non-occupied Ukrainian territories during wartime. The data were gathered using Qualtrics software and then transferred to Google Documents, where it was translated and analyzed using Google Sheets. One-on-one semistructured confidential interviews were conducted with twelve educators who had completed the survey and agreed to participate. These interviews were recorded on Zoom and VoiceMemo, translated from Ukrainian, and printed in Google Documents for further analysis. Following translation, the general phases of data analysis included data preparation and organization, initial immersion, coding, categorizing and theming, and interpretation of findings. These steps helped uncover the coping mechanisms that Ukrainian educators use to maintain well-being while navigating prolonged traumatic experiences during wartime.

Analysis of the Findings

Since the beginning of the war, death has touched every Ukrainian. According to the interview data, participants of the study experience all forms of loss: permanent/death, non-death, anticipatory, and ambiguous. Ukrainian educators perceive the effects of the war on their emotional, physical, and cognitive levels through the lens of various types of loss (Barringer, n.d.). As educators, all participants have experienced permanent loss not only on a personal level, but also through the loss of their students.

Participants experience anticipatory loss with every air raid alert, compounded by the lack of communication with those on the frontline or in the prefrontal regions. When educators bring children underground during air raid alerts, they experience anticipatory loss not just for

themselves but also for their students. Non-death loss for participants includes the loss of relationships, financial stability, planned or unplanned water and electricity outages, hope, cherished architectural monuments, buildings, entire cities, and the ability to travel. Ambiguous loss for Ukrainian educators includes the loss of students or relatives due to the migrations of millions of people since the full-scale invasion.

The data analysis uncovered the coping strategies most frequently employed by Ukrainian educators to maintain their own well-being and that of their students. The narratives describe how Ukrainian educators find meaning and well-being in living through the war. Three major findings are derived from this research.

I. There is no single coping mechanism that works always, everywhere and for everyone.

The analysis of the survey data revealed that the most common strategies Ukrainian educators use to maintain well-being during wartime are: personal communication; using social media; checking the news after air raid alerts; reading and writing; physical exercises; and listening to music.

After a careful analysis of the survey data, I found that the most common strategies Ukrainian educators use to support their students' well-being during wartime are: 1. Physical exercises. Tamara explained, "We take a break and then we continue with the lesson. I offer various exercises to stabilize students, to renew them. It is something that they can use in the future. I also use exercises for companionship and friendship in the group." 2. Art and craft projects. "Our kids are so creative because we have taught them so", depicted Nadia. 3. Listening to music, singing, or playing a musical instrument. One of the survey respondents wrote, "I love concerts, musical performances, and singing."

II. Maintaining well-being amidst prolonged traumatic experiences requires educators to sustain connections with others.

The thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017) of the interviews further highlighted that connection with others is the most widely used coping mechanism among all participants. Nina emphasized, “Strengthen your social connections. Renew any lost ones, especially if you've moved to a new place or transitioned from one job to another. Remember, we are people, and we help each other.” Participants experience connection with others in various ways: teaching and volunteering, meeting and speaking with close friends and relatives, using social media, and following the news after air raid alerts.

III. Any and all coping mechanisms work best when practiced mindfully.

Other popular coping mechanisms among Ukrainian educators are: 1. Reading and writing. One of the survey respondents explained, “Nowadays, it is impossible to live without reading and writing.” 2. Physical exercises such as walking or dancing. Nadiya stated, “Physical exercises help me to forget this (about reality), even if just for a little while.” And others, such as practicing gratitude and maintaining a routine. All coping mechanisms demonstrate best results when a practitioner is able to purposefully pay attention to her work. Larysa acknowledged, “I feel calm only when I am embroidering because I have to be fully concentrated on what I am doing.” Below, I discuss the findings and the opportunities for their implementation.

Discussion

As educators, participants observe the impact of war not only on themselves but on their students and other stakeholders. Regardless of their age, all Ukrainian children have been impacted by the war, though the extent and nature of the impact vary. Sanya emphasized, “Children are like a litmus paper. They feel everything (tears and happiness) twice as intensely as

adults, and they bring all of it to us. More aggression, more joy, more dejection and despondency." Even when studying in person, students often spend hours, or even the majority of the school day — underground due to air raid alerts.

Educators stated that during these periods, students spend most of their time on their phones, playing games or watching videos. Like adults, children experience various forms of loss: the loss of their homes, non-material things, stability, joy, hope, and the loss of relatives and friends. Teachers observe how the war affects their students on multiple dimensions: emotionally, socially, cognitively, motivationally, and physically.

Although the findings are not generalizable, the experiences of Ukrainian educators shed light on coping strategies that may be valuable for educators, psychologists, and professionals in helping fields. The narratives of Ukrainian educators, who manage to function and deliver high quality education while experiencing complex trauma, can offer insights to educators worldwide on handling trauma, maintaining well-being, and supporting their students in doing the same. While the study's findings are context-specific, they hold broader relevance because all humans experience stress, trauma, and loss. Everyone needs to know how to maintain well-being and identify which coping strategies work for them and when.

Those who teach, who lead, and who heal — give their students, clients, colleagues, and subordinates love and energy. To sustain this giving, they should also receive love and energy from somewhere for themselves. This is why it is essential for them to understand which healthy coping mechanisms work for them and when. It is equally important to remember that no single coping mechanism will always work for everyone and in every situation. Individuals can, and should, utilize multiple healthy coping mechanisms, which may evolve over time. Practitioners need to develop the habit of using healthy coping mechanisms during periods of stability.

Without this foundation, there is a high likelihood of developing and relying on unhealthy coping mechanisms during challenging and unpredictable times.

Leaders, especially educational leaders, consciously or unconsciously influence and teach others. Leaders are those who create culture in organizations. A culture that either encourages or neglects the practice of maintaining well-being. How leaders take care of themselves, the coping mechanisms they use to manage stress, and how they maintain well-being, serve as living examples for those around them. This study can serve as a resource for educational leaders, helping them understand the importance of fostering connection within their teams, providing opportunities for creativity, and emphasizing the role of physical movement and music in individuals' lives. Ultimately, those who sustain their well-being in the long term are able to serve and work more effectively than those who don't.

This study can inform a broader population living through trauma, helping educators worldwide to transform their own and their students' trauma. The findings can benefit educators, school counselors, and professional development programs in areas connected with socio-emotional learning and trauma-sensitive education. The educational significance may contribute to the broader scholarly understanding of coping strategies for dealing with trauma, maintaining well-being, and improving the learning environment. The results of this research can be offered to educators as a guide for maintaining well-being and learning coping mechanisms to address both their own trauma and that of their students.

Although there is existing research on coping mechanisms used by educators to maintain well-being, studies confirming the benefits of mindfulness or storytelling for educators, and separate studies on effective coping mechanisms, no research has yet explored the integration of coping mechanisms, mindfulness, and storytelling as a combined tool for educators to use in

their practices to maintain well-being and deal with trauma. This is why this study is new to the field and to the research literature.

This study provides valuable insight for educators on the importance of maintaining their own well-being; raising awareness of effective coping strategies for supporting themselves and their students during traumatic events. It highlights the benefits of connection with others and the combined use of mindfulness and storytelling, emphasizing the necessity of practicing these approaches in daily life and in the classroom. Additionally, this study underscores the importance of continuous learning and development, understanding of trauma-sensitive environments, coping mechanisms, and maintaining well-being for educators and their students.

As Tamara affirmed, she learns everything available to support children and understand them. By understanding others, she better understands herself. Through this self-awareness, she can find coping mechanisms to support her own well-being. When she supports her own well-being, she is better equipped to help others learn coping mechanisms and support their well-being. Tamara emphasized, “Allow yourself”. Educators should allow themselves to be role models. They need to be genuine because children learn from examples, not merely from words.

Delimitations and Limitations

The study was conducted virtually in February and March 2024 with Ukrainian educators living in non-occupied territories of Ukraine during wartime. At the time the study was conducted, they had been living in the trauma of wartime for two years. They worked with their students in various contexts, in person, hybrid, and online. These educators experienced teaching and caring for students amidst the challenges of war. Additionally, as Ukrainians living in Ukraine, their experiences are influenced by cultural differences that may distinguish them from

educators in other countries. A limitation of the study is the uniqueness of these educators' experiences.

Being born in Ukraine and knowing Ukrainian history, culture, and all spoken languages helped me connect with participants, even if I had not known them prior to the interviews. To mitigate the study's limitations, I acknowledged my biases and kept daily reflective journals throughout the research process. Additionally, while attending case studies, therapeutic discussions, and peer support groups at the VeLa project, I maintained field notes for internal validity. The survey and interview questions were shared with experts in the field from both the United States and Ukraine for evaluation. This process ensured that all significant facets of the construct were addressed, thereby establishing the content validity of the research. To further ensure the integrity of the study, I met with my advisor weekly to discuss my findings.

Future Research

I hope that the conceptual framework presented in this study serves as just the starting point for further research in the field of Education, particularly on topics such as being, suffering, stress, trauma, surviving, well-being, and coping mechanisms. Further studies could explore the correlation between the use of healthy and unhealthy coping mechanisms and the prolongation of trauma. Additionally, analysing the coping mechanisms and how they affect individuals could benefit the fields of Education and Psychology. Further research investigating and comparing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Post Traumatic Growth would also be highly valuable and contribute to a deeper understanding of these phenomena.

Further research could explore how American educators in Florida, Massachusetts, and across the US maintain well-being and cope with their own trauma and their students' trauma. Researchers in other countries might also conduct similar research to identify coping

mechanisms that help educators worldwide maintain their well-being. Additional comparative studies could examine differences between educators in urban and non-urban areas, regions with varying crime rates, and countries experiencing humanitarian crises versus those that are not. This research might extend beyond the field of Education, encouraging scholars to investigate how professionals in caring fields cope with their own trauma and the trauma of their clients or patients.

Final Words

This study explores educators' insights and experiences in seeking well-being during prolonged trauma. The developed conceptual framework guided the analysis and organization of the data. The literature review mirrors findings correlated with participants' perceptions of trauma, suffering, surviving, and the coping mechanisms they use to maintain well-being.

The stakeholders of this study were Ukrainian educators, psychologists, children, and their families. This study can be translated into Ukrainian language and shared with educators, psychologists, and professionals in helping fields to promote self-care, instill hope that well-being can be maintained during wartime, and equip them with effective coping mechanisms to support themselves, their students, and their clients.

The narratives of my Ukrainian colleagues provided a unique perspective not only on surviving prolonged trauma but also on the phenomenon of maintaining well-being during wartime through the use of specific coping mechanisms. While working with them, I was fascinated with their resilience in the face of some of the most traumatic events a human being can endure. I was also profoundly moved by their ability not only to take care of themselves during these challenging times but also to support those around them, especially their students.

AFTERWORD

> The force of love has no opposite. There is no other power in life but love. There isn't a force of negativity… All negative things you see in the world are always, always manifestations of a lack of love. Whether that negativity is in a person, place, circumstance, or event, it has always come from a lack of love. — Byrne, *The Secret the Power.*

This research was made possible through my ability to unconditionally love those around me and those far away. It was driven by my desire to bring even a little happiness to as many people as possible, even if only for a moment. Through these feelings, I experience connection to others. While taking classes in my PhD program, I often heard from professors that it is not always the researcher who finds the research, but the research finds the researcher. This study definitely found me. On one hand, it emerged as a consequence of several years of practicing and using mindfulness in my personal and professional life. And on the other hand, it was shaped by my volunteer work with Ukrainian collegeaus. I am deeply grateful to all the professionals from both the American and Ukrainian sites who helped create an environment of healing and support during our meetings.

Have you ever thought about what type of environment you create with your presence? Have you ever thought about what type of non-verbal messages you transmit with each of those trillions of cells that your body consists of? Personally, I aspire to create joy and happiness around me, as Dare to Do (2021) emphasized, "Your joy is what makes you alive" (4:52).
I know that it is not an easy task. Before beginning my daily meditation practice, I saw myself as someone who always did good things. My stories were filled with pride in my kindness and care for others, but were also weighed down by feelings of hurt from others' ingratitude.

After reading Brown's (2020) *The Gifts of Imperfection*, I realized that my feelings stemmed from a lack of boundaries. When I began meditating, I came to understand that people around me do not always feel, think, or talk about my actions in the way I perceive them. While I was aware of the differences of consciousness and perception in theory, hours of meditation gave me a deeper understanding of how these differences operate in real life. Meditation shifted my consciousness.

Now I am fully aware that my actions do not always come across as intended. For example, students, particularly those unaccustomed to being challenged at school, may become upset with a teacher who pushes them to grow. They respond by interpreting as an insult every action or word from that instructor. In such cases, what educators say and what students hear, often become two entirely distinct messages. Being mindful of said duality enables educators to pause when they detect their message as being perceived incorrectly, and to respond, rather than react.

The practice of mindfulness and storytelling has made me a more resilient person. I accept myself, people around me, and circumstances as they are, more and more. I remember to be grateful for a given moment as it is. I have become a more optimistic person, capable of being compassionate to myself and those around me. By cultivating acceptance, resilience, gratitude, optimism, and compassion through practicing mindfulness and storytelling, educators can better understand their students and all the people around them, while simultaneously promoting their own well-being and that of others.

Over the last three years, I clearly realized that there is no "magic wand", no single, universal coping mechanism that works for me and everyone else. Similarly, no single coping strategy can resolve all issues. My findings confirm that a human being has to constantly develop

in four dimensions: physical, mental, spiritual, and artistic. Some individuals can combine two or even three coping mechanisms at once.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that coping mechanisms should bring balance to different aspects of our lives: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Coping mechanisms should be adjusted every day, according to one's conditions. As Weinstein (2015) explained in her book B is for Balance:

> In the end, the key word is balance. You need to find the right balance that works for you. Celebrate your successes and don't dwell on your failures. Life is a process, and so is thriving for balance in your life. A universal law that is the basis of all economic and personal well-being describes how to put the law to work for you, increase your effectiveness, and experience a more abundant life (p. 269).

Supporting Well-being: Tips for Educators Working With Students Affected by Trauma

At the conclusion of the interviews, participants recommended the following techniques for colleagues who have experienced trauma themselves or work with students who have encountered traumatic events in Ukraine and globally:

First, "and most importantly", proceed with love. All interviewed educators suggested that those, who work with children, have to love them. Larysa observed, "When you love a child, you will find the right words to make her feel understood. It's necessary to love children." Valentyna stressed, "Only through kindness and love can we help a child to feel protected. We can show her that there is kindness in the world, despite evil; that there are people who really care and understand her pain, feelings, and worries." Maryna explained, "Try to understand a child's emotional state and mood. Don't leave it behind. Love them; hug them; smile at them." Tamara explained, "Some children come to school to learn, some to receive love. It's important

to have “love hugs” during the breaks.” The hardest aspect of being able to love children while experiencing traumatic events is burnout. No one can love another human being without first experiencing love for herself. This is why all participants emphasized the importance of self-care.

Second, know thyself and what coping mechanisms work for you in a given moment “in order to balance yourself before meeting with students” (Sanya). Maryna emphasized, **“**Find resources for yourself to be in resource.” Sergij responded, “Think not only about children, but about yourself. Understand yourself, your present conditions and state.” Inna suggested, “Go to the psychologists to unload your psychological overload. To speak about your feelings with someone else… Have confidence in your knowledge and strength.” Nina explained, “Remember that we are living beings, with our own emotions, made of flesh and blood. We are not robots. Trully, we can experience different states specifically during grief. I suggest finding the most effective resources for renewal.” Tamara highlighted, “Educators need to be able to balance themselves. You learn how to support oneself and then you can support others. This is so important. Every teacher must observe and regulate themselves.”

Sanya explained, “Whatever emotions you may have, despondency for example, you must leave them at the door; you have to smile no matter what. That’s why teachers need to know a lot of coping mechanisms (breathing, tapping, physical exercises, mindfulness).” All interviewed participants agreed that it is crucial for educators to be aware of which coping mechanisms work and when to use them. To find the right coping strategies, educators must remain curious.

Third, be curious. Inna stressed, “It's important to continue self-development. Don’t stop at any age. It is essential to use practices of self-knowledge.” Diana explained “Learn more,

especially about trauma and self-care, non-stop. We can think that we know everything, but science is always developing and evolving and it's very useful to read and learn." Tamara emphasized, "Be curious. Your curiosity will be transferred to children. Learn new things. Go to webinars, conferences and learn new things about how to work with children during traumatic events or with children who lived with trauma." When you are curious and continually learning, it becomes easy not only to teach but also to support and benefit your students.

Fourth, "do no harm". Diana highlighted, "Be careful. Do no harm. Do not transport trauma. If you do not have enough knowledge it's better not to do anything at all! This is important." Maryna expressed, "All educators have to learn about psychological processes, about mindfulness, and yoga." Tamara stated, "Educators should understand how war and/or trauma affects children's cognitive development. Teachers have to understand what is happening with children. Why don't they do homework? Why do they react the way they do?" Olena explained,

> Do no harm. Observe a child. What does he need? If a child needs your help, he will ask for help. Same with hugs, don't hug children without asking. Sometimes children need to cry alone. Most importantly, do no harm. The most important thing is to not overstep the acceptable boundaries. The limits for each child are different. One child will let you be very close, another at arm's length, while some may want you to remain two meters away. It might take as long as an hour for a child to be able to communicate with others. An educator should understand how she can help a child here and now, this minute. Ask a question, 'Does the child need my help?' Maybe the child can deal with what is going on herself. Maybe there is someone else who can help. Sometimes educators can harm children with their advice and their desire to help. Speak with children. Listen to them. Ask questions. Don't label and assume.

Sergij stated, “Understand children’s early needs and your early needs. Gain a better understanding of the world children live in and how it affects them. World not as a philosophical concept, but as the cognitive and physical state that affects children.” Sanya offered, “Understand how they feel and how you can improve their state. Do no harm.” Educators who can understand student’s feelings and emotions must know how to redirect children and help them balance.

Fifth, know which coping mechanisms you can use in your work with children at specific times. Learn as many as you can, so in case one of the mechanisms does not work, you can use a different one. Use mindfulness, yoga, storytelling, art therapy, and music therapy. Inna suggested, “Unite children around you. Make it like a family. Teach children to be a team. Whether children work as a team or not depends on a teacher or the adult who works with them.” Maryna explained, “No matter what kind of trauma students experience outside of school, what teachers create inside of the classroom matters. Children have to feel comfortable and safe in school. Children are like clay and teachers are like sculptors; we shape them everyday.” To sculpt something beautiful, educators must be mindful of their own form and essence.

Sixth, be an example to students they aspire to follow. Watch your verbal and non-verbal cues. Think, what do your students actually learn from you? Maryna expressed, “Don’t discuss news in front of children. Don’t talk about the horrors of politics and the end of the world. Don’t speak about discouragement, destroyed cities, death and terror.” Nadiya beautifully concluded, “Don’t give up. Remember your purpose. Continue to work with students. Support them with your own resilience, stability, and calmness. Be an example YOURSELF that your students will want to follow.”

In closing, I would like to express my hope and prayer that this research, along with its implementation, brings more light than darkness and more good than harm. Amen.

References

Abke, A. (2024, July 25). *The way of the Law/ How Jesus taught the Law of One.* [Video]. YouTube.

Adames, H. Y., Chavez-Dueñas, N. Y., Vasquez, M. J. T., & Pope, K. S. (2023). Asking for help when we need it. In *Succeeding as a therapist: How to create a thriving practice in a changing world.* (pp. 185–188). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/0000321-028

Adler, E.S., & Clark, R. (2015). *An invitation to social research: How it's done* (5th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Ahmed, T., Qassem, M., & Kyriacou, P. A. (2023). Measuring stress: a review of the current cortisol and dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) measurement techniques and considerations for the future of mental health monitoring. *Stress*, *26*(1), 29–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/10253890.2022.2164187

Aiex, N. K. (1993). *Bibliotherapy.* ERIC Digest.

Alper, S. A. (2016). *Mindfulness meditation in psychotherapy : an integrated model for clinicians*. Context Press, an imprint of New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

American Dance Therapy Association. (2020). *What is Dance/MovementTherapy?* https://adta.memberclicks.net/what-is-dancemovement-therapy

American Psychiatric Association. (2022). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders: DSM - 5 - TR™.* (5th ed). Text Revision. American Psychiatric Association.

American Psychological Association. (2022). *Emotions.* https://www.apa.org/topics/emotions

American Psychological Association. (2023). *Meditation.*

https://dictionary.apa.org/meditation/

American Psychological Association. (2023). *Mindfulness meditation.* *https://dictionary.apa.org/mindfulness-meditation*

American Psychological Association. (2022). *Resilience.* https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience/

Antarova, E. A. (1995). *Dve zhizni.* [Two lives] (3rd ed., Vol. 1). Moscow: Sirin'.

Aurelius, M. (2017). *Meditations: adapted for the Contemporary Reader by James Harris.* (J. Harris, Adapt.).

Baikie, K.A., & Wilhelm K. (2005). Emotional and physical health benefits of expressive writing. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, *11*(5), 338-346.

Balban, M. Y., Neri, E., Kogon, M. M., Weed, L., Nouriani, B., Jo, B., Holl, G., Zeitzer, J. M., Spiegel, D., & Huberman, A. D. (2023). Brief structured respiration practices enhance mood and reduce physiological arousal. *Cell Reports Medicine*, *4*(1), 100895. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.xcrm.2022.100895

Barr, D. A. (2018). When trauma hinders learning. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *99*(6), 39–44. https://doi-org.ezproxyles.flo.org/10.1177/0031721718762421

Barringer, K. (n. d.). *Grief and loss.* H.E.A.L.I.N.G. Helping Everyone Accepting Loss Instead of Neglecting Grief. https://www.healingforgriefandloss.com/

Barringer, K. (2024, February 8). *Change is loss and loss is change 2 - The Sequel.* H.E.A.L.I.N.G. https://www.healingforgriefandloss.com/blog/change-is-loss-and-loss-is-change-2-the-sequel/

Bavishi, A., Slade, M. D., & Levy, B. R. (2016). A chapter a day: Association of book reading with longevity. *Social Science and Medicine, 164*, 44 - 48.

Beckett, W. (1999). *Sister Wendy's 1000 masterpieces.* DK Publishing, Inc.

Belim, V. (2023). *The rooster house: a Ukrainian family story.* Abrams Press.

Bell, J. (2014). *Positive psychology: Research and applications of the science of happiness and fulfillment: New field, new insight.*

Bennet-Goleman, T. (2001). *Emotional alchemy.* Three Rivers Press.

Berlin, I. (1995). The Idea of Pluralism. In Anderson W. T. (Ed.), *The truth about the truth: De-confusing and Re-constructing the Postmodern World* (pp. 46-52). NY: Penguin Putnam.

Bezo, B., & Maggi, S. (2015). Living in "survival mode:" Intergenerational transmission of trauma from the Holodomor genocide of 1932–1933 in Ukraine. *Social Science & Medicine, 134,* 87-94. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.04.009

Bibliotherapy. (n.d) Merriam-Webster. Retrieved November 24, 2024. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bibliotherapy

well-being (n.). (2024). Etymonline. Retrieved November 16, 2024. https://www.etymonline.com/word/well-being

Biegel, G. M. (2009). *The stress reduction workbook for teens.* Instant Help Books.

Billings, A. G., & Moos, R. H. (1981). The role of coping responses in attenuating the impact of stressful life events. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine (4),* 139-157.

Bingham, A.J., & Witkowsky, P. (2022). Deductive and inductive approaches to qualitative data analysis. In C. Vanover, P. Mihas, & J. Saldaña (Eds.), *Analyzing and interpreting qualitative data: after the interview* (pp. 133-146). SAGE Publications.

Bonds, C. (2016). *Best storytelling practices in education.* (Publication No. 693) [Doctoral dissertation, Pepperdine University]. Pepperdine Digital Commons.

Borang, K. K. (2013). *Principles of Reiki: What it is, how it works, and what it can do for you*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Bornstein, M. H., Davidson, L., Keyes, C. L. M., & Moore, K. (2003). *Well-Being: Positive Development Across the Life Course*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Boulder Crest Foundation. (2024). *Understanding Posttraumatic Growth.* https://bouldercrest.org/research-resources/what-is-posttraumatic-growth-ptg/

Brady, R. (2021). *Walking the teacher's path with mindfulness.* Routledge.

Braun, V., Clarke, V., Boulton, E., Davey, L., & McEvoy, C. (2021). The online survey as a qualitative research tool. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *24*(6), 641–654. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2020.1805550

Brems, C. (2001). *Basic skills in psychotherapy and counseling.* Brooks/Cole.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. In *International Encyclopedia of Education, Vol.* 3, *2nd*. *Ed*. Oxford: Elsevier. Reprinted in: Gauvain, M. **&** Cole, M. (Eds.), *Readings on the development of children, 2nd Ed.* (1993, pp. 37-43). Freeman.

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Ceci, S. J. (1994). Nature-nurture reconceptualized: A bio-ecological model. *Psychological Review, 10* (4), 568–586.

Brouillette, M. (2021). *Effective mindfulness practices for reducing veteran teacher perceived stress* (Publication No. 415) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts]. UMass Global ScholarWorks.

Brown, B. (2020). *The gifts of imperfection.* Random House.

Brown, C. H. (2018). Perceptions of School Counselors Surviving a School Shooting. *Professional School Counseling*, *22*(1), 1–13.

Buber, M. (1970). *I and thou.* Scribner's.

Burmester, D. (2020). *Knowing*. Lesley University.

Burr, V. (2015). *Social constructionism* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Byrne, R. (2010). *The secret the power.* Atria Books.

Causey, D. L., & Dubow, E. F. (1993). Negotiating the transition to junior high school: The contributions of coping strategies and perceptions of the school environment. *Prevention in Human Services, 10,* 59-81.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, August 3). *Well-Being Concepts.* CDC. https://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/wellbeing.htm

Cherepanov, E. (2015). Psychodrama of the Survivorship. *The Journal of Psychodrama, Sociometry, and Group Psychotherapy*, *63*(1).

Cherryhomes, C. H. (1992). Notes on pragmatism and scientific realism. *Educational Researcher, 14,* 13-17.

Chödrön, P. (2018). *Comfortable with uncertainty.* Shambhala.

Chopra, D. (2020). *Total meditation: Practices in living the awakened life* (First Edition). Harmony Books.

Chumney, F. (2015, February 1). *Interpretive Frameworks for Qualitative Research* [Video]. Youtube. https://youtu.be/e-_f1yX_uJ0

Ciarrochi, J., & Kashdan, T. B. (Eds.). (2013). *Mindfulness, acceptance, and positive psychology: The seven foundations of well-being*. New Harbinger Publications.

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. The Journal of Positive Psychology, 12(3), 297–298. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613

Cole, S. F. (2005). *Helping traumatized children learn: supportive school environments*

for children traumatized by family violence. Massachusetts Advocates for Children.

Compas, B.E. (2009). Coping, regulation, and development during childhood and adolescence. *New Directions in Child and Adolescent Development.* 124: 87–99. doi: 10.1002/cd.245. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/cd.245

Constellation Guide. (2024). *Vela Constellation. https://www.constellation-guide.com/constellation-list/vela-constellation/#:~:text=Vela%20myth,the%20shipwright%20who%20built%20it.*

Cosentino, B. W. R. C., & Randall, B., MD. (2024). Art therapy. *Salem Press Encyclopedia of Health*.

Covey S. (2020). *The 7 habits of highly effective people.* Simon & Schuster.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.

Crisan, C.A.; Milhem, Z.; Stretea, R.; Hossu, R.M.; Florean, I.S.; Chereches¸, R.M. (2023), Coping mechanisms during the War in Ukraine: A cross-sectional assessment among Romanian Population. *Healthcare*, *11*, 1412. https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare11101412

Crosse, T. (1928). "Literature and Character: The Place of Good Literature in Character Building," *Welfare Magazine, 19*, 925-931.

Crothers, S. M. (1916) "A Literary Clinic" *Atlantic Monthly, 118,* 291-301.

Cuncic, A. (2022, October 17). *Internal Validity vs. External Validity in Research.* Verywellmind. https://www.verywellmind.com/internal-and-external-validity-4584479

D'Ansembourg, T. (2007). *Being genuine.* Puddle Dancer.

Dalai Lama (2002). *How to practice: The way to a meaningful life.* J. Hopkins, Trans.). Atria

Books.

Damico, N. (2019). *Leadership storytelling: How elementary school principals use storytelling to lead and make transformational change*. (Publication No. 291) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts]. UMass Global ScholarWorks.

Dance: Research Starters Topic. (2021). *Dance: Research Starters Topic*.

Dare to Do. Motivation. (2021, March 24). *Three laughing monks story - zen motivation.* [Video]. Youtube. https://youtu.be/MCX4YqcW7kU

Data on Education Reported by Researchers at Wellesley College (The Consequences of High-fatality School Shootings for Surviving Students). (2024, March 27). *Education Letter*, 119.

Davis, T. (2019, January 2). *What Is Well-Being? Definition, Types, and Well-Being Skills.* Psychology Today. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/click-here-happiness/201901/what-is-well-being-definition-types-and-well-being-skills

Davis, P. & Magee, F. (2020). *Reading*. Emerald Publishing.

Day, H. (2018). Use of Stories in Courses and Student Engagement at Southwestern Michigan College" (Dissertations. 1661. Andrews University, Digital Commons @ Andrews University.

Debesay, J., Naden, D., & Slettebø, A. (2008) How do we close the hermeneutic circle? A gadamerian approach to justification in interpretation in qualitative studies. Nursing Inquiry, 15(1), 57-66. DOI: 10.1111/j.1440-1800.2008.00390.x.

De Calheiros Velozo, J., Vaessen, T., Claes, S., & Myin-Germeys, I. (2024). Investigating adverse daily life effects following a psychosocial laboratory stress task, and the moderating role of Psychopathology. *Stress*, *27*(1).

https://doi.org/10.1080/10253890.2024.2380403

Denton-Borhaug, K. (2022). Suffering by Dorothee Sölle. *Salem Press Encyclopedia of Literature*.

Desai, P. (2015). *Exploring the impact of mindfulness on adolescents: A mixed methods approach* (Publication No. 1634) [Doctoral dissertation, Loyola University]. Loyola eCommons.

Dewanti S. R., & Wu, Y. (2023). Analyzing Children's Trauma during the Covid-19 Pandemic Using Relational-Cultural Theory: A Literature Review. *Jurnal Kajian Bimbingan Dan Konseling*, *8*(2), 78–93. https://doi.org/10.17977/um001v8i22023

Dewey, J. (1910). *How We Think.* D. C. Heath & Co., Publishers.

Dewey, J. (1944). *Democracy and education*. The Free Press.

Diamond, J. (1992). *The third chimpanzee: The evolution and future of the human animal.* Harper Perennial.

Dictionary. (2023). *Vela.* https://www.dictionary.com/browse/vela

Dietrich, T., Wiles, R., & Lovegrove, B. (2017). *Mindfulness and education : research and practice*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Dispenza, J. (2012). *Breaking the habit of being yourself: how to lose your mind and create a new one.* Hay House.

Dixon, K. E., Mahoney, C. T., & Samuelson, K. W. (2023). Ongoing traumatic stress during a global pandemic. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, 15*(5), 808–818. https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0001360

Dlugosz, P. (2023). War trauma and strategies for coping with stress among Ukrainian refugees staying in Poland. *Journal of Migration and Health, 8*(100196).

https://doi-org.ezproxyles.flo.org/10.1016/j.jmh.2023.100196

Downs, P. G. (1992). *Classical music : the era of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven / Philip G Downs*. W.W. Norton.

Dufynets, V., Shcherban, T., & Hoblyk, V. (2024). Post-traumatic stress in children as a result of war: Strategies for psychological support. *Scientific Studios on Social and Political Psychology*, 30(1), 16-26. https://doi.org/10.61727/sssppj/1.2024.16

Eisner, E. (2002). What the arts for the young. *School Arts (102),* 16 - 17.

EMPOWER. (2022). *Yoga.* Empower. https://www.empowerforwellness.org/yoga

Endler, N. S., & Parker, J. D. A. (1999). *Coping inventory for stressful situations (CISS): Manual.* (2nd ed.). Multi-Health Systems.

Erikson, E. H., & Erikson, J. M. (1997). *The life cycle completed (extended version)*. Norton.

Etymonline. (2024). *Well-being.* Retrieved November 16, 2024. https://www.etymonline.com/word/well-being

Eusden, S. (2020). *Hide and Seek: a grounded theory study of psychotherapists' experience of needing and asking for help*. https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=bde949c7-71b7-37ef-b702-04d8b3c6521d.

Everly, J., & Lating, J. M. (2019). *A Clinical Guide to the Treatment of the Human Stress Response* (4th ed. 2019). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-9098-6

Faye, C., Mcgowan, J. C., Denny, C. A., & David, D. J. (2018). Neurobiological Mechanisms of Stress Resilience and Implications for the Aged Population. *Current neuropharmacology*, *16*(3), 234–270. https://doi.org/10.2174/1570159X15666170818095105

Felver, J. C., Singh, N. N., & Horner, R. H. (2020). *Mindfulness in the classroom : an*

evidence-based program to reduce disruptive behavior and increase academic engagement. New Harbinger Publications.

Finlay, J. (2023). *Art history 101: The essential guide to understanding the creative world.* Arcturus.

First Aid of The Soul. (2022). *Rebuilding Ukraine through mental health.* https://www.firstaidofthesoul.org

Fitzpatrick, K. (2006). *World art: The essential illustrated history.* Flame Tree Publishing.

Frankl, V. E. (2006). *Man's search for meaning.* Beacon Press.

Fraser, A. (2017). *Discovering the leader within: An autoethnophenomenographic study of mindfulness in educational leadership* (Publication No.130) [Doctoral dissertation, Lesley University]. DigitalCommons@Lesley.

Gangadhar, B., Kalyani, B., Venkatasubramanian, G., Arasappa, R., Rao, N., Kalmady, S., Behere, R., Rao, H., & Vasudev, M. (2011). Neurohemodynamic correlates of ′OM′ chanting: A pilot functional magnetic resonance imaging study. *International Journal of Yoga*, *4*(1), 3. https://doi.org/10.4103/0973-6131.78171

Gaona, M. A. (2022). *Understanding teacher reported experiences of trauma professional development/training* (Publication No. 3989) [Doctoral dissertation, Loyola University]. Loyola eCommons.

Gall, T. L., Charbonneau, C., Clarke, N. H., Grant, K., Joseph, A., & Shouldice, L. (2005). Understanding the nature and role of spirituality in relation to coping and health. *Canadian Psychology (46)*, 88–104.

Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple intelligences: The theory in practice.* Basic Books.

Gelling, L. (2015). Qualitative research. Nursing Standard, 29(30), 43–47.

https://doi.org/10.7748/ns.29.30.43.e9749

Gibbs, R., & Wolfson, E. R. (2002). *Suffering religion / edited by Robert Gibbs and Elliot R. Wolfson*. Routledge.

Giorgi, A. (2012). The descriptive phenomenological psychological method. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 43*(1), 3–12. https://doi.org/10.1163/156916212X632934

Gomez, L. M., Russell, J., Bryk, A., LeMahieu, P., & Mejia, E. (2017). The right network for the right problem. *Phi Delta Kappan, 98,* 8-15.

Goto, R., Guerrero, A., Speranza, M., Fung, D., Paul, C, Skokauskas, N. (2022). *War is a public health emergency.* Lancet. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(22)00479-2

Goulding, P. G. (1995). *Classical music: the 50 greatest composers and their 1,000 greatest works / Phil G. Goulding*. Fawcett Columbine.

Graham, C., Laffan, K., & Pinto, S. (2018). Well-being in metrics and policy. *Science, 362*, 287-288(2018). DOI:10.1126/science.aau5234.

Greek Legends and Myths. (n. d.) *The Argo in Greek Mythology.* https://www.greeklegendsandmyths.com/the-argo.html

Grenville-Cleave, B. (2016). *A toolkit for happiness, purpose and well-being. Positive psychology.* Icon.

Griffith, O. M. (2016). *Gratitude: a way of teaching*. Rowman and Littlefield.

Groves, J. E., & Wei, M. (2017). *The Harvard Medical School guide to yoga: 8 weeks to strength, awareness, and flexibility*. Da Capo Lifelong.

Guidi, J., Lucente, M., Sonino, N., & Fava, G. A. (2021). Allostatic load and its impact on health: A systematic review. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, *90*(1), 11–27. https://doi.org/10.1159/000510696

Guimarães Guerra, L., & A. Nicdao, J. (2019). *Narrative of Suffering [electronic resource]*. BRILL.

Hamad, S. (2007). Creativity: Method or Magic? In H. C. Cohen & Brigitte Stemmer (Eds.) *Consciousness and Cognition*, (pp. 127-137). Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012373734-2/50010-8

Harber, K. D. & Pennebaker, J. W. (1992) *Overcoming traumatic memories.* In The Handbook of Emotion and Memory: Research and Theory (ed. Christianson, S.-Å.) pp. 359–387. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Harris, G. (2021).*The inspired yoga teacher: The essential guide to creating transformational classes your students will love (The language of Yin).* New Zealand ISBN agency.

Harvard Health. (2023). *Benefits of Mindfulness.* Help Guide. https://www.helpguide.org/harvard/benefits-of-mindfulness.htm

Hatch, C. L. (1859). Mrs. Cora L. V. Hatch on Spiritualism: The Law of God a Unit. *Daily Plain Dealer.*

Hawley J. (2001). *The bhagavad gita: a walkthrough for Westerners.* New World Library.

Hay, L. (2004). *You can heal your life.* Hay House.

He, C., & Trainor, L. J. (2009). Finding the pitch of the missing fundamental in infants. *The Journal of Neuroscience, 29*(24), 7718-8822.

Healthy Learning, & Monterey Bay Video Production Company (Producers), & Community Wellness & Exercise is Medicine. (2014). [Video/DVD] Healthy Learning. https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/community-wellness-exercise-is-medicine

Heifetz, R. A. (1994). *Leadership without easy answers.* Harvard University Press.

Herring M. P., Hallgren M., Campbell M. J., (2017) Acute exercise effects on worry, state

anxiety, and feelings of energy and fatigue among young women with probable Generalized Anxiety Disorder: A pilot study. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise (33).* 31-36. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2017.07.009

Higgins, J. E. & Endler, N. (1995). Coping, life stress, and psychological and somatic distress. *European Journal of Personality (9).* 253-270.

Ho, C., Mason, O., & Spence, C. (2007). An investigation into the temporal dimension of the Mozart effect: Evidence from the attentional blink task. *Acta Psychologica, 125,* 117-128).

Holy bible: Kings James version. (2016). Christian Art Publishers. (Original work published 1769).

Honmore, V. M. (2023). Mindfulness, Happiness and Well-being among Adults. *Indian Journal of Positive Psychology*, *14*(2), 184–187.

Huberman, A. (Director). (2021, April 7). *Reduce Anxiety & Stress with the Physiological Sigh | Huberman Lab Quantal Clip* [Video recording]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBdhqBGqiMc

Howe, K. R. (1985). Two dogmas of educational research. *Educational Researcher, 14*(8), 10 - 18.

Huse C. S. (2022). *A quantitative study examining intentional teaching of social emotional skills.* [Doctoral dissertation, Lindenwood University]. Digital Commons@Lindenwood University. https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/dissertations.

Husserl, E. (1931). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology.* Allen and Unwin.

International Federation of the Phonographic Industry. (2023). Engaging with music.

https://www.ifpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/IFPI-Engaging-With-Music-2023_full-Report.pdf

International Rescue Committee. (2022, April 21). *What Ukraine's children need amid the trauma of war.* https://www.rescue.org/article/what-ukraines-children-need-Amid-trauma-war

Ivey, A. E., D'Andrea, M. J., Ivey, M. B. (2012). *Theories of counseling and psychotherapy: a multicultural perspective.* (7th ed.). Thousand Oaks.

Jamieson, J. P., Nock, M. K., & Mendes, W. B. (2012). Mind over matter: reappraising arousal improves cardiovascular and cognitive responses to stress. *Journal of experimental psychology. General*, *141*(3), 417–422. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0025719

Janata, P. (1996). *Electrophysiological studies of auditory contexts* [Dissertation]. University of Oregon.

Jarvie, D. (2019). *The secret language of light: transmissions from your soul.* Blue Angel.

Jaušovec, N., Jaušovec, K., & Gerlic, I. (2006). The influence of Mozart's music on brain activity in the process of learning. *Clinical Neurophysiology, 117*(12), 2703-2714.

Jay, T., & Janschewitz, K. (2008). The pragmatics of swearing. *Journal of Politeness Research 4*, 267 - 288. https://www.mcla.edu/Assets/MCLA-Files/Academics/Undergraduate/Psychology/Pragmaticsofswearing.pdf

Jerath, R., Beveridge, C., & Barnes, V. A. (2019). Self-Regulation of Breathing as an Adjunctive Treatment of Insomnia. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, *9*, 780. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2018.00780

Jerling, P. (2023). The Meaning that Five Music Teachers Ascribe to Their Lived Experiences of Music and Imagery Sessions During the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Interpretative

Phenomenological Analysis. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, *24*, 1–27. https://doi.org/10.26209/ijea24si2.3

Jickling, B. (2009). Sitting on an old gray stone: Meditations on emotional understanding. In M. McKenzie, P. Hart, H. Bai, & B. Jickling (Eds.), *Fields of green* (pp. 163-173). Hampton Press.

Johnson, S. T., Dadi, D., Friedman, J. K., Hanson, S., Tavernier, R. L. E., & Mason, S. M. (2024). The role of prior trauma exposure and subsequent posttraumatic stress disorder in reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic: A qualitative study. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, *16*(6), 942–949. https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0001541

Johnson-Laird, P.N., Khemlani S. S., & Goodwin G. P. (2015). Logic, probability, and human reasoning. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 19*(4), 201-214. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2015.02.006.

Jung, C. G., & Stein, M. (1995). *Jung on evil / selected and introduced by Murray Stein*. Princeton University Press.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice 10,* 144–156.

Kanojia, Al. [HealthyGamerGG]. (2023, May 13). *Here's why trauma is so common (A deep dive into understanding trauma)* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/8TkbP4XfggM?si=-J2saEt90-fcYT-g

Kapystyan, G. (2022). Enlightening mission of WIT (WORLD INFORMATION TRANSFER) in disclosure of the truth about the 1932-1933 Holodomor-genocide in Ukraine. *Український Селянин*, *28*. https://doi.org/10.31651/2413-8142-2022-28-Kapustyan

Kariv, D., & Heiman, T. (2005). Task-Oriented Versus Emotion-Oriented Coping Strategies: The Case of College Students. *College Student Journal*, *39*(1), 72–84.

Kaufman, S. B., & Gregoire, C. (2015). *Wired to create: unraveling the mysteries of the creative mind / Scott Barry Kaufman and Carolyn Gregoire*. Perigee Books.

Kegan, R. (2009). Chapter 3 - What "form" transforms? A constructive developmental approach to transformative learning. In K. Illeris (Ed.) *Contemporary theories of learning: Learning theorists… in their own words* (pp.35-52). Routledge.

Kegan, R. (2013, July 10). *The further reaches of adult development*. [Video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BoasM4cCHBc

Kegan, R., & Lahey, L. L. (2001). *How the way we talk can change the way we work: Seven languages for transformation*. Jossey-Bass.

Keller, A., Litzelman, K., Wisk, L.E., Maddox, T., Cheng, E.R., Creswell, P.D., Witt, W.P. (2012) Does the perception that stress affects health matter? The association with health and mortality. *Health Psychology, 31*(5), 677-684. doi: 10.1037/a0026743.

Kenomagwen, M. (2013) The Teachings of Grass. In Kimmerer R. W. (Ed.), *Braiding sweetgrass:Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teaching of plants*. (pp. 156-166). Minneapolis, MN.

Khan, A. (2022, March 31). *How is the Ukraine war affecting children's mental health?* Aljazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/3/31/how-is-the-ukraine-war-affecting-childrens-mental-health#:~:text=Following%20Russia%E2%80%99s%20invasion%20of%20Ukraine%2C%20the%20children%20there,the%20breakdown%20of%20their%20usual%20routines%20and%20structures

Khayyam, O. (2018). *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.* Sirius. (Original work published 1859).

Klassen, J. A., Liang, Y., Tjosvold, L., Klassen, T. P., & Hartling, L. (2008. Music for pain and anxiety in children undergoing medical procedures: A systematic review of randomized controlled trials. *Ambulatory Pediatrics, 8,* 117-128.

Klein, K., & Boals, A. (2001). Expressive writing can increase working memory capacity. *Journal of experimental psychology: General*, *130*(3), 520.

Kostruba, N., & Kostruba, A. (2024). Social support as a factor of mental health in wartime conditions: Communication and interaction. *Scientific Studios on Social and Political Psychology*, 30(1), 39-45. https://doi.org/10.61727/sssppj/1.2024.39

Kraemer-Holland, A. (2021). Addressing trauma and empowering students through school-based mindfulness practices. *Contemporary Justice Review*, *24*(1), 107–122. https://doi-org.ezproxyles.flo.org/10.1080/10282580.2020.1819802

Krantz, A. M., & Pennebaker, J. W. (2007). Expressive dance, writing, trauma, and health: When words have a body. *Whole Person Healthcare (3),* 201-229.

Krkovic, K., Clamor, A., & Lincoln, T. M. (2018). Emotion regulation as a predictor of the endocrine, autonomic, affective, and symptomatic stress response and recovery. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, *94*, 112–120. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psyneuen.2018.04.028

Kromka, S. M. & Goodboy, A. K. (2019). Classroom storytelling: using instructor narratives to increase student recall, affect, and attention. *Communication Education, 68* (1), 20–43 https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2018.1529330.

Lambert, V. A., Lambert, C. E., Itano, J., Inouye, J., Kim, S., Kuniviktikul, W., Sitthimongkol,Y., Pongthavornkamol, K., Gasemgitvattana, S., & Ito, M. (2004). Cross-cultural comparison of workplace stressors, ways of coping and demographic characteristics as predictors of physical and mental health among hospital nurses in Japan,

Thailand, South Korea and the USA (Hawaii). *International Journal of Nursing Studies (41),* 671–684.

Laverty, S. (2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *2*(3), 21-35. DOI: 10.1177/160940690300200303.

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress appraisal and coping.* Springer.

Leavy, P. (2023). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches.* Gilford Press.

Lengel, T., & Kuczala, M. (2010). *The kinesthetic classroom: Teaching and learning through movement.* Thousand Oaks.

Leon, C. E. (2023). Vicarious trauma: a phenomenological qualitative study of school counselors and self-care. *Doctoral Dissertations and Projects*. 4417. https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/4417

Levy-Carrick, N., & Warren, A. (2018). *Music as a Social Determinant of Health: A Trauma-informed Care Perspective.* https://remix.berklee.edu/mh-exchange-music-medicine/2

Lincoln, Y. S, & Guba, E. G. (2000). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research.* (pp. 163 - 188). Thousand Oaks.

Linsin, M. (2016). *The happy teacher habits.* JME.

Litvak, M. E. (2003). *Esli hochesh' byt' schastlivum.* [If you want to be happy]. (4th ed.). Fenix.

Long, C. (2023, March 07). *Teaching in Ukraine after a year of war. The bravery and resilience of Ukrainian educators is helping students manage the trauma of war.* National

Education Association. https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/teaching-ukraine-After-year-war

Lukianoff, G. & Haidt, J. (2018). *The coddling of the American mind: how good intentions and bad ideas are setting up a generation for failure.* Penguin Books.

Luna, K. (Host). (2019, December). Speaking of Psychology: Transformation after trauma, with Richard Tedeschi, PhD. (No. 96) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Speaking of Psychology.* American Psychological Association. https://www.apa.org/news/podcasts/speaking-of-psychology/transformation-trauma

Márquez Aponte, E. (2020). Trauma-Informed Strategies to Support Complexly Traumatized Adolescents in Schools in the Time of the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Theory in Action*, *13*(3), 124–139. https://doi.org/10.3798/tia.1937-0237.2040

Martin, A. J., & Dowson, M. (2009). Interpersonal relationships, motivation, engagement, and achievement: Yields for theory, current issues, and educational practice. *Review of Educational Research (79*), 327–365.

Maslow, A. H. (2013). *A theory of human motivation.* Martino Publishing.

Mate, G. & Mate, D. (2022). *The myth of normal: trauma, illness & healing in a toxic culture.* Avery.

Mattlin, J. A. (1990). Situational determinants of coping and coping effectiveness. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 31*(1), 103-122.

Mauss, I.B., Cook, C.L., Cheng, J.Y.J., & Gross J. (2007). Individual differences in cognitive reappraisal: Experiential and physiological responses to an anger provocation. *International Journal of Psychophysiology, 66,* 116–124. doi: 10.1016/j.ijpsycho.2007.03.017

May, R. (1969). *Love and will.* Norton.

Mazelis, J. M. (2017). *Surviving poverty: Creating sustainable ties among the poor / Joan Maya Mazelis*. New York University Press.

McEncroe, M., (2007). "Incorporating Bibliotherapy Into the Classroom: a Handbook for Educators" *Regis University Student Publications (comprehensive collection)*. https://epublications.regis.edu/theses/74

McGonigal, K. (2015). *The upside of stress: why stress is good for you, and how to get good at it.* Avery.

Medical Dictionary. (2023). *Coping.* https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/coping

Meditation Lessons. (2023a, May 25). *Управление эмоциями, сила воли, смысл жизни. 10 эффектов медитации, которые изменят тебя [Management of emotions, willpower, the meaning of life. 10 Meditation effects that will change you]*. [Video]. Youtube. https://youtu.be/SjcSJ29Mu8Y

Meditation Lessons. (2023b, July 13). *Даже если ты сделал все неправильно, ты все сделал правильно [Even if you did everything wrong, you did everything right].* [Video]. https://youtu.be/CKzy6At8bhg

Melamed, S. (1994). Life stress, emotional reactivity and their relation to plasma lipids in employed women. *Stress Medicine, 10,* 167-175.

Mental Health Connection of Tarrant County. (n. d.) *Recognize trauma: Change a child's future.* http://recognizetrauma.org/statistics.php

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.

Mertens, D. M. (2015). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating*

diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks.

Meyer, K. and Meyer, K. M. (2021). *The happiness workshop for middle school students: The experience of learning flow through photographic storytelling* (Publication No. 1016) [Student publications, Regis University]. ePublications at Regis University.

Mindful Schools. (2016). *Why Mindfulness is Needed in Education.* Retrieved from Mindful School website: http://www.mindfulschools.org/about-mindfulness /mindfulness-in-education/

Mindfulness Definition & Meaning. (2022, December 20). Merriam-Webster. Retrieved December 25, 2022, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ Mindfulness

Mills, K. (Host). (2022, February). Speaking of Psychology: Why we choose to suffer, with Paul Bloom, PhD. (No. 176) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Speaking of Psychology.* American Psychological Association. https://www.apa.org/news/podcasts/speaking-of-psychology/pain-suffering

Morgado, F. F. D. R., Campana, A. N. N. B., & Tavares, M. D. C. G. C. F. (2014). Development and validation of the self-acceptance scale for persons with early blindness: the SAS-EB. *PloS one, 9*(9), e106848.

Morin, A. (2023, July 27). *Understanding the Effects of Childhood Trauma.* Verywellmind. https://www.verywellmind.com/what-are-the-effects-of-childhood-trauma-4147640

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods.* Sage Publications.

Murphy, J. P. & Rorty, R. (1990). *Pragmatism: From Peirce to Davidson.* Westview Press.

Murphy, S., Melandri, E., & Bucci, W. (2021). The effects of story-telling on emotional experience: An experimental paradigm. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, *50*(1),

117–142. https://doi-org.ezproxyles.flo.org/10.1007/s10936-021-09765-4

Mytko, D. (2022). Finding the story in the data. In C. Heller (Ed.), *Telling the story in the data* (pp. 39 - 51). Teachers College Press.

National Astronauts and Space Administration.(2024, June 27). *Newton's Third Law: Action & reaction.* https://www1.grc.nasa.gov/beginners-guide-to-aeronautics/newtons-laws-of-motion/#:~:text=His%20third%20law%20states%20that,opposite%20force%20on%20object%20A

National Center for Complimentary and Integrative Health. (2024, November 22). *Meditation and Mindfulness: Effectiveness and Safety.* https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/meditation-and-mindfulness-effectiveness-and-safety#:~:text=Other%20forms%20of%20meditation%20include,the%20practices%20with%20other%20activities

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environment. (n. d.). *Secondary traumatic stress and self-care packet*. https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/Building_TSS_Handout_3secondary_trauma.pdf

National Institute of Mental Health. (2018, July). *Anxiety disorders*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health. https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml

National Institute of Mental Health. (2023, March). *Mental Illness.* https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness#:~:text=An%20estimated%2049.5%25%20of%20adolescents%20had%20any%20mental,an%20estimated%2022.2%25%20had%20severe%20impairment%20and%2For%20distress.

National Institute of Mental Health. (n.d.). *I'm So Stressed Out! Fact Sheet.* https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/so-stressed-out-fact-sheet

Navarro, J., & Karlins, M. (Collaborator). (2008). *What every body is saying: An ex-FBI agent's guide to speed-reading people.* Collins.

Neff, K. (2011). *Self-compassion: The proven power of being kind to yourself.* William Morrow, and imprint of HarperCollins Publishers.

Neubauer, B. E., Witkop, C. T., & Varpio L. (2019). How phenomenology can help us learn from experience of others. *Perspectives on Medical Education 2,* 90-97. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-019-0509-2

Nguyen, J. (2022). *Don't believe everything you think: why your thinking is the beginning & end of suffering.*

Nguyen K., Stanley, N., Rank, A., Stanley, L., & Wang, Y. (2016). The relationship among storytelling, values, and resilience of college students from Eastern and Western cultural backgrounds. *Journal of Poetry Therapy, 29*(2), 73–88. https://doi.org/10.1080/08893675.2016.1176162

Nietzsche, F. (1887). *On the Genealogy of Morals.* (M. Scarpitta, Trans.) Penguin.

Noah, T. [The Diary Of A CEO]. (2024, September 30). *Dr. K: We are producing millions of lonely, addicted, purposeless men & women!* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/P1ALkQMfkjc?si=z_Lw90b61PmJLXUy

Nwoko, J. C., Anderson, E., Adegboye, O. A., Malau-Aduli, A. E. O., & Malau-Aduli, B. S. (2024). "SHIELDing" Our Educators: Comprehensive Coping Strategies for Teacher Occupational Well-Being. *Behavioral Sciences*, *14*(10), 918. https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14100918

Orem, D. (2001). *Nursing: concepts of practice* (6th ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Parfit, D. (1984). *Reasons and persons.* Clarendon Press.

Parmenter, A. (2013). I *am a teacher walking a mile in her shoes: A narrative study of teacher identity* (Publication No. 21) [Doctoral dissertation, Lesley University]. Digital Commons@Lesley.

Patanjali (2012). *Yoga sutras of Patanjali.* (S. S. Satchidananda, Trans.) Integral Yoga Publications. (Original work published 1978).

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods.* Newbury Park.

Pemberton, C. (2015). *Resilience: A practical guide for coaches*. Open University Press.

Peoples, K. (2021). *How to write a phenomenological dissertation. A step-by-step guide.* Sage.

Pert, C. B. (1997). *Molecules of emotion: Why you feel the way you feel.* New York, NY: Scribner.

Peterson, J. B. (2018). *12 rules for life: An antidote to chaos.* Penguin Books.

Peterson, J. B. (2021) *Beyond order: 12 more rules for life.* Penguin Books. https://youtu.be/HseTZkLLS_c?si=W7jkcdB_0HRuj-MH

Peterson, L. (2017). The science behind the art of storytelling. *Leading the Way* (blog). https://www.harvardbusiness.org/the-science-behind-the-art-of-storytelling/

Pfeiffer, E., Garbade, M., & Sachser, C. (2024). Traumatic events and posttraumatic stress symptoms in a treatment-seeking sample of Ukrainian children during the war. *Child and adolescent psychiatry and mental health*, *18*(1), 25. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-024-00715-1

Piaget, J. (1971). *Psychology and epistemology*. Viking.

Picard, K., (2018). *An investigation into learning and development associated with embodied mindfulness* (Publication No. 147) [Doctoral dissertation, Lesley University]. Digital Commons@Lesley.

Plokhy, S. (2023). *The russo-Ukrainian War: The return of history.* W. W. Norton & Company.

Pollock, K., Wang, F., & Mahfouz, J. (2020). *School Administrators' Well-Being and Mindfulness*. Emerald Publishing Limited.

Poonam, D. (2015). *Exploring the impact of mindfulness on adolescents: A mixed methods approach* (Publication No.1634) [Doctoral dissertation, Loyola University]. Loyola eCommons.

Poulin, M. J., Brown, S. L., Dillard, A. J., & Smith, D. M. (2013). Giving to others and the association between stress and mortality. *American journal of public health*, *103*(9), 1649–1655. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2012.300876

Precin, P. (2014). *Surviving 9/11 : Impact and Experiences of Occupational Therapy Practitioners*. Taylor and Francis.

Price, D. (2018, March 23). *Laziness does not exist*. Medium.

Raviv. T., & Wadsworth M. E. (2010). The efficacy of a pilot prevention program for children and caregivers coping with economic strain. *Cognitive Therapy and Research (34)*, 216–228.

Reeder, N. (2009). *A qualitative case study of natural storytelling strategies used at the Nantahala School.* (Publication No. 1890) Electronic Theses and Dissertations. https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/1890

Rizzi, D., Ciuffo, G., Landoni, M., Mangiagalli, M., & Ionio, C. (2023). Psychological and environmental factors influencing resilience among Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced persons: a systematic review of coping strategies and risk and protective factors. *Frontiers in Psychology (14)*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1266125

Rogers, C. (1977). *On personal power.* Delacourt.

Rogers, C. (1980). *A way of being.* Houghton Mifflin Company.

Rolland, R. (2023, August 30). *Talk for resilience: lessons from Ukrainian schools Conversations are the key to restoring children's humanity.* Psychology Today. https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/the-art-of-talking-with-children/202308/talk-for-resilience-lessons-from-ukrainian-schools

Roozendaal, B., McEwen, B. S., & Chattarji, S. (2009). *Stress, memory, and the amygdala. Nature Reviews Neuroscience 10,* (6), 423-433.

Russo, M. A., Santarelli, D. M., & O'Rourke, D. (2017). The physiological effects of slow breathing in the healthy human. *Breathe*, *13*(4), 298–309. https://doi.org/10.1183/20734735.009817

Rutledge, P. (2011, January 16). *The psychological power of storytelling.* Psychology Today. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/positively-media/201101/the-Psychological-power-storytelling

Salmon P. (2001) Effects of physical exercise on anxiety, depression, and sensitivity to stress: A unifying theory. *Clinical Psychology Review*, Volume 21, Issue 1, Pages 33-61, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-7358(99)00032-X.

Salzgeber, J. (2019). *The little book of Stoicism.*

Schnurr, P. P., & Green, B. L. (2004). *Trauma and health: Physical health consequences of exposure to extreme stress*. American Psychological Association.

Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Roeser, R. W. (2016). *Handbook of Mindfulness in Education. [electronic resource] : Integrating Theory and Research into Practice* (1st ed. 2016). Springer New York.

Schwandt, T. A. (2007). *The SAGE dictionary of qualitative inquiry.* Thousand Oaks.

Scott, K. (2020). *Trauma-Informed practices in schools.* (Publication No. 45) [Doctoral dissertation, Lindenwood University]. Digital Commons@Lindenwood.

Segrin, C, Woszidlo, A, Givertz, M, & Montgomery, N. (2013). Parent and child traits associated with overparenting. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology (32)*, 569–595. http://dx.doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2013.32.6.569

Seiffge-Krenke, I. (2000). Causal links between stressful events, coping style, and adolescent symptomatology. *Journal of Adolescence, (23),* 675–691. doi: 10.1006/jado.2000.0352

Seleznova, V., Pinchuk, I., Feldman, I., Virchenko, V., Wang, B. & Skokauskas, N. (2023). The battle for mental well-being in Ukraine: mental health crisis and economic aspects of mental health services in wartime. *Int J Ment Health Syst (17)*, 28. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13033-023-00598-3

Seligman, M. E. P. (2013). *Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment. Authentic happiness.* Atria.

Sergijchyk, V. (2021). Determining the Number of Victims of the Holodomor Genocide of 1932-1933 in Ukraine. *Cxiò*, *2*(2). https://doi.org/10.21847/1728-9343.2021.2(2).239373

Sethi, G. (2021). *Unbelonging.* Mango and Marigold Press.

Shakespeare, W. (1994). *The complete works of William Shakespeare.* Barnes & Noble.

Shapiro, S. L., & Carlson, L. E. (2009). *The art and science of mindfulness. [electronic resource] : integrating mindfulness into psychology and the helping professions* (1st ed.). American Psychological Association.

Sharma, R. (1997). *The monk who sold his ferrari: A fable about fulfilling your dreams and reaching your destiny.* HarperOne.

Sheposh, R. (2024). Art. *Salem Press Encyclopedia*.

Sher, B. (1996). *Live the life you love: In ten easy step-by-step lessons.* A Dell Trade Paperback.

Shrier, A. (2024). *Bad therapy: Why kids aren't growing up.* Sentinel.

Simic, O. (2015). *Surviving peace: A political memoir.* Spinifex Press.

Smile more often to beat any challenge: Study says it's a natural coping mechanism. (2025, February 16). *Hindustan Times (New Delhi, India)*.

Smith, A., Padt, S., & Jones, K. (2024). Catch it, drop it, leave it there: Writing for Wellbeing as a tool for compassionate practice in Higher Education. *PRISM*. https://doi.org/10.24377/prism.article1206

Sousa, D. (2012). *How the brain learns*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Spilt J. L., Koomen, H. M. Y., & Thijs J. T. (2011) *Teacher Wellbeing: The Importance of Teacher–Student Relationships.* Educ Psychol Rev 23: 457–477. DOI 10.1007/s10648-011-9170-y

Sprague, J. (2011). Seeing Through Science: Epistemologies. In Luttrell W. (Ed.), *Qualitative educational research: Readings in reflexive methodology and transformative practice* (pp. 78-94). NY: Routledge.

Sproul, R. C. [Ligonier Ministries]. (2022, August 20). *Dealing with difficult problems: Understanding Suffering* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/XStEoezZQMU?si=_yjaQ3mt72J_Hm-W

Srinivasan, R., & Lohith, C.P. (2017). Pilot study — assessment of validity and reliability. In: Strategic Marketing and Innovation for Indian MSMEs. India Studies in Business and Economics. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-3590-6_6

Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. Guilford Press.

Stanford, L. (2024, August, 02). *How teachers who survived Columbine and Sandy Hook helped their students recover.* EducationWeek. https://www.edweek.org/leadership/how-teachers-who-survived-columbine-and-sandy-hook-helped-their-students-recover/2024/08

Steele, A., & Scott, J. (2016). Emotionality and Learning Stories: Documenting How We Learn What We Feel. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, *21*, 106–124. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1151839

Strekalova-Hughes, E., and Wang, X. C. (2019). Perspectives of Children From Refugee Backgrounds on Their Family Storytelling as a Culturally Sustaining Practice. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 33*(1), 6-21, DOI: 10.1080/02568543.2018.1531452

Stibal, V. (2009). *ThetaHealing.* Rolling Thunder Publishing.

Storytelling With Impact (n. d.). *Storytelling with impact: your story can change the world.* https://www.storytellingwithimpact.com/

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (2023, March 17). *Understanding child trauma.* https://www.samhsa.gov/child-trauma/understanding-child-trauma

Surviving. (2024). Cambridge dictionary. Retrieved November 6, 2024, from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/surviving#google_vignette

Surviving. (2024). Merriam Webster. Retrieved November 6, 2024, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/surviving

Suttles, J. (2024). *Teacher Voices: Stress and Coping Mechanisms among the Teaching Profession.* [Master's thesis, Dominican University of California]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. Digital Commons@Lesley. https://doi.org/10.33015/dominican.edu/2024.EDU.03

Sweeney, M. S. (2009). *Brain: The complete mind.* National Geographic.

Sylvester, R. (1995). *A celebration of neurons: An educator's guide to the human brain.* Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Taleb, N. N. (2012). *Antifragile: Things that gain from disorder.* Random House.

Tan E. (2022). 'Heartware' for the Compassionate Teacher: Humanizing the academy through mindsight, attentive love, and storytelling. *Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching, Vol.5*(2), 1 -22. https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2022.5.2.ss1

Cabrera, B. (2015) *Beyond happy: Women, work, and well-being.* ATD Press.

Terrasi, S., & de Galarce, P. C. (2017). Trauma and learning in America's classrooms. Phi Delta Kappan, 98(6), 35-41.

Tesliuk R. T. (2023). Changes in social roles of the Ukrainian peasantry as the result of collectivisation and Holodomor-genocide of 1932–1933. *Український Соціум*, *3*(86), 26-40. https://doi.org/10.15407/socium2023.03.026

The International Center for Reiki Training. (n. d.). *What is Reiki?* Reiki. https://www.reiki.org/faqs/what-reiki

The Trauma-Sensitive, High-Achieving Classroom. (2023). *Childhood trauma: The facts.* https://traumasensitiveclassrooms.com/childhood-trauma-the-facts/.

ThetaHealing. (2025). *What is ThetaHealing.* ThetaHealing. https://www.thetahealing.com/about-thetahealing/what-is-thetahealing

Tiger, L. (1979). *Optimism: The biology of hope.* Oxford University Press.

Tillich, P. (1961). Existentialism and psychotherapy. *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry (1),* 8 - 16.

Tolle, E. (2004). *The power of now: A guide to spiritual enlightenment.* Namaste Publishing and New World Library.

Tolle, E. [Eckhart Tolle]. (2020, August 31). Simple recipe for overcoming suffering / Eckhart' life practices [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/xANjrN3rVvE?si=1tP3C6orq3mN_NYn

Treleaven, D. A. (2018). *Trauma-sensitive mindfulness: Practices for safe and transformative healing.* W.W. Norton & Company.

Ty Yak? [How are you?] (2024). *Ty yak? Vseykrainska programma mental'nogo zdorov'ya. [How are you? All-Ukrainian program for mental health]*. https://howareu.com/

Tyson, P. D., & Pongruengphant, R. (2007). Buddhist and Western Perspectives on Suffering, Stress, and Coping. *Journal of Religion and Health*, *46*(3), 351–357. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-006-9104-z

Ukrainets' L. (2017, March 08). *Dobrobyt.* National columnist. https://www.ar25.org/word/dobro.html

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2025). *Operational data portal: Ukraine Refugee Situation.* https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (n. d.). *Ukraine war response: Ensuring access to learning. Ensuring Ukrainian children keep learning can mean the difference between hope and despair.* https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/ukraine-war-response-ensuring-access-learn

Uppsala Universitet (2024, September 13). *Library.* https://www.uu.se/en/library/about-the-library/history-of-the-library/healing-place-of-the-soul---the-librarys-exlibris

Valentine, E. M. (2022). Dance movement therapy. *Salem Press Encyclopedia of Health*.

Van Dam, N. T., van Vugt, M. K., Vago, D. R., Schmalzl L., Saron, C. D., Olendzki, A., Meissner, T., Lazar, S. W., Kerr, C.E., Gorchov J., Fox, K. C. R., Field, B. A., Britton,

W. B., Brefczynski-Lewis, J. A., & Meyer, D. E. (2017). Mind the hype: A critical evaluation and prescriptive agenda for research on mindfulness and meditation. *Perspective on Psychological Science. 13*(1), 36-61.https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxyles.flo.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/1745691617709589

van der Kolk, B. (2015). *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma.* Penguin Books.

VeLa. (2024). *Pro proekt [About project].* VeLa. https://vela.ocdut.kr.ua/about-us/

Verburgh, M., Verdonk, P., Muntinga, M., van Valkengoed, I., Hulshof, C., & Nieuwenhuijsen, K. (2024). "But at a certain point, the lights literally went out": A qualitative study exploring midlife women's experiences of health, wellbeing, and functioning in relation to paid work. *Work*, *77*(3), 799–809. https://doi.org/10.3233/WOR-220567

Vo, D. X., & American Academy of Pediatrics, production company. (2014, January 1). *Awareness of breathing / [produced by] American Academy of Pediatrics*. American Academy of Pediatrics.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and language.* M.I.T. Press.

Wadsworth M. E. (2015). Development of maladaptive coping: a functional adaptation to chronic, uncontrollable stress. *Child Dev Perspect*. 2015; 9(2): 96-100. doi:10.1111%2Fcdep.12112

Warwick (2016, February 16). *World's first free online course devoted to the exploration of literature and mental health.* https://warwick.ac.uk/newsandevents/pressreleases/

Watkinson C. J., Cicero G., Burton E. (2021) Addressing Anxiety: Practitioners' Examination of Mindfulness in Constructivist Supervision. *The Professional Counselor, 11*(4), 459–474. world146s_first_free/

Weinberger, N. M. (2004, November). Music and the brain. *Scientific American, 291,* 89-95.

Weinstein, S. (2015). *B is for balance: 12 steps toward a more balanced life at home and at work* (Second edition). Sigma Theta Tau International.

Winchcombe, S., Knoller, F., Greig, T., & BBC Worldwide Ltd., film distributor. (2015, January 1). *Surviving the Holocaust : Freddie Knoller's War / produced and directed by Simon Winchcombe; BBC History production*. BBC Worldwide.

Yogananda (2007). *The yoga of Jesus: understanding the hidden teaching of the gospels*. Self-Realization Fellowship.

Appendix A: Recruitment Email

Dear educators,

My name is Natalya Rakevich, I am a PhD student at Lesley University. For my dissertation I am conducting research about the coping strategies used by educators during the wartime. I am concentrating my research on educators who currently live in Ukraine on non-occupied territories. I emmigrated from Ukraine over 20 years ago, but my bond with Ukraine, its land and people, remains strong. To support the Ukrainian educators and psychologists during this difficult time I started the Vela project in April 2022.

As a fellow educator originally from the Ukraine, I am emailing you to ask you to consider participating in the research project titled "Maintaining Well-being: Coping Strategies for Prolonged Traumatic Experiences from the Stories of Ukrainian Educators During the Wartime". The intent of this research study is to describe how educators living during the active wartime deal with prolonged daily trauma that affects their lives and the lives of their students. Your participation will entail filling out the questionnaire from the survey that consists of seven questions. It will take less than 20 minutes to complete.

This research involves minimal risk to participants. Results will be aggregated and your identity will be protected. No personally identifiable information will be divulged in reported results, and results will be shared with you upon request. Participation is totally voluntary, and you have the right to refuse or withdraw from the study at any time. In the case the survey will be emotional for you and you will feel the need to talk to a psychologist afterward, you may wish to reach out to the VeLa Project at Kirovograd Regional Youth and Children Center, Shulginuh st., 36. Kropivnitskiy, Ukraine. Surkova Hannah Pavlovna is the regional director and can be reached at (050) 688 27 29, surkovahanna@gmail.com and ask for a free session with a psychologist. You can also attend the Zoom Peer Support group that runs on Fridays at 1:00 pm EST by the VeLa project.

This is the Zoom link:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8485649983?pwd=_rfWwvu7zLiYLB18bDnzA2TLFG9EIs.1

Information obtained from this research will inform me in varied ways and help us each to better serve educators around the globe. I would be happy to provide additional details about my research and answer any questions you may have. Your participation will inform other educators by sharing insights into the ongoing efforts to address trauma in schools and help educators to maintain well-being.

If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can contact the researcher: Natalya Rakevich by email: ganchina@lesley.edu or by phone: 781-710-7215.

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairperson at irb@lesley.edu

By clicking this link below you are confirming that you are 18 years of age or older and agree to be part of this research.

[link]

Sincerely,

Natalya Rakevich
My email: ganchina@lesley.edu
My cell phone number: 781-710-7215

Ukrainian Translation: Електронний лист для визначення респондентів

Шановні освітяни!

Мене звати Наталя Ракевич, я аспірантка Університету Леслі який знаходиться у Сполучених Штатах Америки, місті Кембридж штата Массачусетс. Для своєї дисертації я проводжу дослідження копінг-стратегій, які використовують освітяни під час війни. Моє орієнтовано на освітян, які зараз проживають в Україні на вільній території. Я емігрувала з України понад 20 років тому, але мій зв'язок з Україною, її землею та людьми залишається міцним. Щоб підтримати українських освітян та психологів у цей складний час, у квітні 2022 року я започаткувала проект Vela.

Як педагог, родом з України, я звертаюся до вас електронною поштою з проханням розглянути можливість участі в дослідницькому проекті під назвою «Збереження добробуту: стратегії подолання тривалого травматичного досвіду з історії українських освітян під час війни». Мета цього дослідження – описати, як освітяни, які живуть під час активної війни, справляються з тривалими щоденними травмами, які впливають на їхнє життя та життя їхніх учнів.

Ваша участь передбачатиме заповнення анкети з опитування, яка складається з семи питань. Це займе менше 20 хвилин.

Я буду вдячна Вам за ваш внесок у важливу справу. Це дослідження пов'язане з мінімальним ризиком для учасників. Результати будуть узагальнені, а ваша особистість буде захищена. Жодна особиста інформація не буде розголошена у звітних результатах, а результати будуть надані вам за запитом.
Участь є повністю добровільною, і ви маєте право відмовитися від участі у опитуванні в будь-який час. У разі, якщо опитування буде для вас емоційним, і ви відчуватимете потребу поговорити з психологом після цього, ви можете звернутися до проекту VeLa за адресою: Кіровоградський обласний центр дитячої та юнацької творчості, вул.Шульгіних, 36, Кропивницький, Україна. Ганна Суркова є регіональним директором, з нею можна зв'язатися за телефоном (050) 688 27 29, surkovahanna@gmail.com і попросити про безкоштовну сесію з психологом. Ви також можете відвідати групу взаємної підтримки Zoom, яка працює по п'ятницях о 20:00 за Київським часом у рамках проекту VeLa.

Це посилання на Zoom:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8485649983?pwd=_rfWwvu7zLiYLB18bDnzA2TLFG9EIs.1

Інформація, отримана в результаті цього дослідження, буде узагальнена і допоможе кожному з нас краще служити освітянам по всьому світу. Я буду рада надати додаткову інформацію про моє дослідження та відповісти на будь-які ваші запитання. Ваша участь інформуватиме інших освітян, ділячись думками про поточні зусилля щодо подолання травми в школах і допомоги педагогам підтримувати благополуччя.

При виникненні будь-яких проблем у зв'язку з дослідженням можна зв'язатися зі мною: Наталією Ракевич за email: ganchina@lesley.edu або за телефоном: 781-710-7215.

В Університеті Леслі існує постійний комітет з досліджень на людях, до якого можна і потрібно повідомляти скарги або проблеми, що стосуються будь-якого дослідницького проекту, якщо вони виникають. Зв'язатися з головою комітету можливо за адресою: irb@lesley.edu.

Натискаючи на це посилання нижче, ви підтверджуєте, що вам виповнилося 18 років і ви погоджуєтеся взяти участь у цьому дослідженні.

[посилання]

Щиро ваша

Наталія Ракевич

Моя електронна адреса: ganchina@lesley.edu

Мій номер мобільного телефону: 781-710-7215

Appendix B: Survey Questions

1. What is your gender?

2. In which instructional setting are you currently teaching (please indicate the age group)?

3. How long have you been in the field of education?

4. What is/are your current role(s) in your school?

5. Indicate how often you participate in the following support activities during this time of war.

1 - Always 2 - Often 3 - Sometimes 4 - Hardly 5 - Would like/Planning to start soon

6 - Never

Watching TV (Please Explain)

Searching the News after Air Raid Alerts

Personal Communications / Meeting / Speaking with Close Relatives and Friends

Going to Psychologist or Other Specialists

Technology: Playing Games on the Computer, Phone, Playstation, or Other Electronic Device

Using of Social Media

Art or Craft Projects,

Breathing Exercises (Please Explain)

Physical Exercises, walking, and/or Dancing (Please Explain)

Music, Singing, in Chorus, Playing Instruments, Listening to Music (Please Explain)

Using of Alcohol or Tobacco

Using of Substances

Using Prescribed Psychotropic Medications

Using Non-Prescribed Psychotropic Medications

Meditating (Please Explain)

Storytelling (Please Explain)

Mindful Exercises (Please Explain)

Reading /Writing (Please Explain)

Praying or using religions rituals

Others (Please Explain)

6. How often do you engage your students in the following support activities during this time of war?

1 - Always 2 - Often 3 - Sometimes 4 - Hardly 5 - Never

6 - Would like/Planning to start soon

Physical Exercises, Walking, and/or Dancing (Please Explain)

Breathing Exercises (Please Explain)

Art or Craft Projects (Please Explain)

Mindful Exercises (Please Explain)

Storytelling (Please Explain)

Reading /Writing (Please Explain)

Music, Singing, Chorus, Playing instruments, listening to music (Please Explain)

Others (Please Explain)

7. Will you be willing to share your experiences with me during a Zoom interview (of no more than one hour)?

No, not able to at this time. Yes (please write your first name and email)

Ukrainian Translation: Запитання опитування:

1. Яка ваша стать?

2. В якому навчальному закладі ви зараз працюєте (вкажіть, будь ласка, вік дітей)?

3. Як давно Ви працюєте у сфері освіти?

4. Яка ваша посада у вашому закладі?

5. Вкажіть, як часто ви берете участь у наступних заходах підтримки під час війни.

1 - Завжди 2 - Часто 3 - Іноді 4 - Навряд чи 5 - Хотів би/Планую почати найближчим часом 6 - Ніколи

Перегляд телевізора (поясніть, будь ласка)

Пошук новин після повітряної тривоги

Особисте спілкування / Зустріч / Розмова з близькими родичами та друзями

Похід до психолога або інших фахівців

Технології: ігри на комп'ютері, телефоні, Playstation або іншому електронному пристрої

Використання соціальних мереж

Мистецькі або творчі проекти

Дихальна гімнастика (поясніть, будь ласка)

Фізичні вправи, ходьба та/або танці (будь ласка, поясніть)

Музика, спів, хор, гра на музичних інструментах, прослуховування музики (поясніть, будь ласка)

Вживання алкоголю або/і тютюну

Використання наркотичних речовин

Використання призначених психотропних препаратів

Використання психотропних препаратів, що не призначаються за рецептом

Медитація (поясніть, будь ласка)

Сторітелінг (поясніть, будь ласка)

Вправи на усвідомленість, майндфулнес (поясніть, будь ласка)

Читання / Письмо (поясніть, будь ласка)

Молитва або використання релігійних ритуалів

Інше (поясніть, будь ласка)

6. Як часто ви залучаєте своїх учнів до наступних допоміжних заходів під час війни?

1 - завжди 2 - часто 3 - іноді 4 - ледве 6 - Хотів би/Планую почати найближчим часом
5 - ніколи

Фізичні вправи, ходьба та/або танці (будь ласка, поясніть)

Дихальна гімнастика (поясніть, будь ласка)

Мистецькі або творчі проекти (поясніть, будь ласка)

Вправи на усвідомленість, майндфулнес (поясніть, будь ласка)

Сторітелінг (поясніть, будь ласка)

Читання / Письмо (поясніть, будь ласка)

Музика, Спів, Хор, Гра на інструментах, прослуховування музики (Поясніть, будь ласка)

Інше (поясніть, будь ласка)

7. Чи хочете Ви поділитися зі мною своїм досвідом під час інтерв'ю в Zoom (тривалістю не більше однієї години)?

Ні, наразі не можу

Так (будь ласка, напишіть своє ім'я та адресу електронної пошти)

Appendix C: Interview Consent Form

(CONFIDENTIAL)

Dear participant,

Thank you for agreeing to take part in my study about "maintaining well-being during the wartime" and to participate in an individual interview session (of no more than one hour). The purpose of this study is to focus on the coping strategies for prolonged traumatic experiences during the wartime. This study is part of an academic project for my doctoral studies with Lesley University. Your participation in this study will be significant and important for the findings that will be reported in my dissertation. All information will remain anonymous and confidential. No personal information will be shared, nor published.

To participate in the study you must be an educator who works with children and teenagers, living on non-occupied territories during the wartime.

The interview session will be recorded, and it will be transcribed as part of the study. These transcribed notes will not be published or shared with anyone else except with the researcher. The researcher will guarantee anonymity by securing files with passwords, and the notes or any identifying information will never be used in published work. Files will be secured with encryption (transcripts from the interviews, and any files will be locked up – not accessible by anyone other than the researcher). All files will be destroyed or deleted once the dissertation has been successfully accepted and presented at Lesley University.

Your participation is voluntary. Although there are no monetary benefits, I hope you find comfort in telling your story. Even though there are minor risks in participating in this research, talking about your experience and how you maintain your well-being during wartime might bring up stressful emotions. If the interview causes undue emotional stress the interview will end and a psychologist will be provided. If emotions are triggered afterward, you still have the opportunity to reach out to the VeLa Project at Kirovograd Regional Youth and Children Center, Shulginuh st., 36. Kropivnitskiy, Ukraine. Surkova Hannah Pavlovna is the regional director and can be reached at (050) 688 27 29, surkovahanna@gmail.com and ask for a free session with a psychologist.

You can also attend the Zoom Peer Support group that runs on Fridays at 1:00 pm EST by the VeLa project.
This is the Zoom link:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8485649983?pwd=_rfWwvu7zLiYLB18bDnzA2TLFG9EIs.1

Acknowledgement of participation
I am volunteering to participate in this study. I have been told that I can stop at any time, and I do not have to answer any questions if I do not want to. No one will know my identity or answers except the researcher. I also have been told that I can reach out to the Lesley University office of Doctoral Studies if I have any questions, concerns or complaints about my participation in this study. I am willing to participate in a Zoom interview with Natalya Rakevich. The interview may last up to one hour long.

_____

By signing below you confirm that you understand the purpose of the research and agree to participate. A copy of this form will be emailed to you.

_____ _____
Participant's full name (please print) Participant's email address

_____ _____
Participant's signature Date

Researcher: Natalya Rakevich: ganchina@lesley.edu

_____
Signature

_____
Date
Ph.D Committee Chair: Dr. Patricia Crain de Galarce: pcrainde@lesley.edu

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the committee Co-Chairs irb@lesley.edu at Lesley University, 29 Everett Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02128. (A copy will be available for the participant.)

Ukrainian Translation: Форма згоди на співбесіду:

(КОНФІДЕНЦІЙНО)

Шановний учаснику!

Дякую, що погодилися взяти участь у моєму дослідженні на тему «збереження добробуту під час війни» та взяти участь в індивідуальній співбесіді (тривалістю не більше однієї години). Мета цього дослідження – зосередитися на копінг-стратегіях тривалого травматичного досвіду під час війни. Це дослідження є частиною академічного проекту для моєї докторантури в Університеті Леслі. Ваша участь у цьому дослідженні буде значною та важливою для висновків, які будуть представлені в моїй дисертації. Вся інформація залишиться анонімною та конфіденційною. Жодна особиста інформація не буде передана або опублікована.

Для участі у дослідженні необхідно бути педагогом, який працює з дітьми та підлітками, які проживають на неокупованих територіях під час війни.

Інтерв'ю буде записане, і розшифроване як частина дослідження. Ці розшифровані нотатки не будуть опубліковані або передані нікому, крім дослідника. Дослідник гарантує анонімність, захищаючи файли паролями, а нотатки або будь-яка ідентифікаційна інформація ніколи не будуть використані в опублікованій роботі. Файли будуть захищені шифруванням (стенограми інтерв'ю, а також будь-які файли будуть заблоковані – недоступні нікому, крім дослідника). Всі файли будуть знищені або видалені після того, як дисертація буде успішно прийнята і представлена в Університеті Леслі. Ваша участь є добровільною. Хоча грошової вигоди немає, я сподіваюся, що ви знайдете втіху в тому, щоб розповісти мені свою історію.

Незважаючи на те, що участь у цьому дослідженні пов'язана з незначними ризиками, розповідь про свій досвід і про те, як ви підтримуєте своє благополуччя під час війни, може викликати стресові емоції. Якщо інтерв'ю викликає надмірне емоційне напруження, інтерв'ю закінчеться і Вам буде надано психолога. Якщо після цього виникнуть емоції, у вас ще є можливість звернутися до проекту VeLa в Кіровоградському обласному молодіжному та дитячому центрі, вул.Шульгінух, 36. Кропивницький, Україна. Суркова Ганна Павлівна є регіональним директором, з нею можна зв'язатися за телефоном (050) 688 27 29, surkovahanna@gmail.com і попросити про безкоштовну сесію з психологом.

Ви також можете відвідати групу взаємної підтримки Zoom, яка працює по п'ятницях о 20:00 за Київським часом у рамках проекту VeLa.

Це посилання на Zoom:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8485649983?pwd=_rfWwvu7zLiYLB18bDnzA2TLFG9EIs.1

Підтвердження участі

Я добровільно беру участь у цьому дослідженні. Мені сказали, що я можу зупинитися в будь-який момент, і мені не потрібно відповідати на жодні запитання, якщо я цього не хочу. Ніхто не дізнається ні моєї особистості, ні відповідей, крім дослідника. Мені також сказали, що я можу зв'язатися з офісом докторантури Університету Леслі, якщо у мене виникнуть будь-які питання, занепокоєння або скарги щодо моєї участі в цьому дослідженні. Я готова взяти участь у Zoom-інтерв'ю з Наталією Ракевич. Інтерв'ю може тривати до однієї години.

_____

Підписуючись нижче, ви підтверджуєте, що розумієте мету дослідження та погоджуєтеся взяти участь. Копія цієї форми буде надіслана вам електронною поштою.

_____ _____

Прізвище та ім'я учасника Адреса електронної пошти учасника

_____ _____

Підпис учасника Дата

Науковий співробітник: Наталія Ракевич: ganchina@lesley.edu

_____

Підпис

_____

Дата

Голова докторського комітету: д-р Патрісія Крейн де Галарсе: pcrainde@lesley.edu

В Університеті Леслі існує Постійний Комітет з досліджень на людях, до якого можна і потрібно повідомляти скарги або проблеми, що стосуються будь-якого дослідницького проекту, якщо вони виникають. Зв'яжіться зі співголовами комітету irb@lesley.edu в Університеті Леслі, 29 Еверетт-стріт, Кембридж, штат Массачусетс, 02128. (Примірник буде доступний для учасника.)

Appendix D: Questions for Semi-Structured Interview

Open-ended question	Possible follow-up to participant response
What can you tell me about your experience as an educator working during the period of war?	Thank you for sharing your story and for the work you are doing daily.
What strategies do you use to maintain your well-being?	Do you feel that war events affect you and your students? How?
How do you acknowledge the war events in your work with children?	Why? Or why not? If yes, how do you do it? How do you deal with yours and your students' negative emotions?
What strategies do you use in the classroom with your students?	Can you give me an example of that? When does that work best
Have you heard about mindfulness as a strategy- what does it mean to you?	Do you use mindfulness in your work (for self or with students)?
Have you heard about storytelling as a strategy- what does it mean to you?	Do you use storytelling in your work (for self or with students)?
What advice do you have for other adults working with children at this time?	Thank you

Ukrainian Translation: Питання для напівструктурованого інтерв'ю

Відкрите запитання	**Можливі подальші дії у відповідь учасника**
Що ви можете розповісти про свій досвід роботи освітянкою в період війни?	Дякую, що поділилися своєю історією і за роботу, яку ви виконуєте щодня.
Які стратегії ви використовуєте, щоб зберегти своє благополуччя?	Чи відчуваєте ви, що події війни впливають на вас і ваших учнів? Як?
Як ви визнаєте події війни у своїй роботі з дітьми?	Чому? А чому ні? Якщо так, то як це зробити? Як ви справляєтеся зі своїми негативними емоціями та емоціями своїх учнів?
Які стратегії ви використовуєте на заняттях зі своїми учнями?	Чи можете ви навести мені приклад? Коли це працює найкраще
Чи чули ви про майндфулнес як стратегію – що це означає для вас?	Чи використовуєте ви майндфулнес у роботі? Для це
Чи чули ви про сторітелінг як стратегію – що це означає для вас?	Чи використовуєте ви сторітелінг у роботі? Як?
Що ви можете порадити іншим дорослим, які працюють з дітьми під час війни?	Дякую