Reducing Overwhelm with the STOP Technique

IN SCHOOLS, THE PACE IS FAST AND THE DEMANDS ARE CONSTANT. WHEN STRESS BUILDS, IT CAN FEEL DIFFICULT TO THINK CLEARLY, RESPOND INTENTIONALLY, OR STAY GROUNDED.

The STOP Technique is a simple, mindfulness-based practice that helps you interrupt overwhelm in the moment and return to presence.

Even pausing for less than a minute can:

- Slow a racing mind
- Reduce the physical effects of stress
- Help you respond (instead of react)
- Support clearer decision-making

Over time, this practice builds emotional regulation and resilience.

WHY THIS MATTERS IN SCHOOLS

When educators pause, classrooms shift. Practicing STOP can:

- Model emotional regulation for students
- Reduce reactive discipline
- Increase psychological safety
- Support healing-centered school environments

This is not about perfection. It is about practice.

Even one conscious breath can change the trajectory of a moment.

S STOP

Interrupt your thoughts with the gentle command: *"Stop."*
Pause whatever you're doing. Create a brief moment of stillness.

T TAKE A BREATH

Notice your breathing.
Inhale slowly through your nose.
Exhale fully through your mouth.
Take 1–3 intentional breaths. Let your nervous system settle.

O OBSERVE

Notice what is happening inside and around you:

- What thoughts are present?
- What emotions are arising?
- What sensations do you feel in your body?
- What is happening in your environment?

Observe without judgment. Simply notice.

P PROCEED

Ask yourself:

- What matters most right now?
- What is the most grounded next step?

Move forward with intention.

Healing Schools Project

Cultivating healing-centered, equity-driven school communities.
Take a breath. Pause. Begin again.