

# The Aftermath of the Big Event

By Joyce Sunada "The Wellness Educator"

**W**OW, what a fantastic event Ever Active Schools hosts! They successfully model a Comprehensive School Health approach within the parameters of their annual Shaping the Future conference. Together over 800 people come together and create a positive social environment that nurtures and fuels the knowledge skills and attitudes that are needed to support healthy school communities throughout Alberta and Canada!

The positive feedback on the sessions attended, the new friendships made and the rekindled friendships all contribute to a fantastic experience and a high-energy weekend. Now it's a couple weeks later and your head is swirling! You may be feeling tired, 'full of information', eager to implement ALL the new ideas learned and at the same time a little anxious thinking, "How can I follow through on ALL the conversations and ideas I participated in at the conference?" No longer surrounded by the majestic mountains and the rooms full of powerful health champions, you may feel alone and start to doubt yourself.

Let's walk through this "aftermath" together! First of all, get into a comfortable position and simply breathe. Allow your body to relax and your mind to flow where it wants to go, just pay attention and continue breathe - no rush, no hurray, simply be present. Once you feel your mind has calmed down and you are relaxed, reflect on the sessions you attended, the people you met and the learnings you gathered. Know that they were exactly what you needed to experience this year, at this event. I have attended Shaping the Future every year since it began in 2009 and my experience of each conference has been quite different. I have learned to embrace the uniqueness of the messages and welcome the new connections each year. I realize there have been many varied contributions to my life over the years.

As you continue to breathe, start to reflect on highlights and low lights of the weekend. What did you really enjoy? What do you wish was different? Tune into the feelings and sensations that are seeking your attention. Ask yourself, where do I go from here? Listen to the message that is calling you. Realize you can't do everything that you learned at the conference today, but you can do something. I suggest you identify one or two people you want to reconnect with and give them a call or send them an email. By focusing on a key 'message or take away' that inspired you and following through on it, you will gain confidence and momentum as you move forward to support your school community.

While immersing yourself back into your daily routine, share your experiences from the conference. People love stories and want to be part of the excitement you are creating and help enhance your healthy school community.

Most important of all, recognize your personal needs coming home from the conference and honour them. You might want to take a long walk in the great outdoors, sit and read a novel, go for a coffee with a family member you missed while away or go to bed at 7:00 one night to help rejuvenate yourself.

The Ever Active Schools' Shaping the School conference is a wonderful event that inspires school communities to Share Grow and Ignite! It definitely sparks an energy and a light in all of the Health Champions who attend. As you experience the aftermath of the big event, I encourage you to focus your burning desires on making small changes in your school community and ignite your staff and students . . . one step at a time.

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