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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Caring in Crisis*, by Mark A. Smylie and Joseph F. Murphy.

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Who Cares for the Caring School Leader?

To serve others well . . . all who give care need to regularly replenish the water they pour. Without replenishment, they will run dry and be of little use to anyone.

To be truly caring of others, school leaders must also be cared for. A hospice chaplain made this point well when she spoke about her ministry as a service of care. She described herself and other human service providers as water pitchers. She compared her service and theirs to pouring water to quench the thirst of others; to comfort and heal them physically, emotionally, and spiritually; and to promote their well-being. She argued that to serve others well, human service providers—indeed, all who give care—need to regularly replenish the water they pour. Without replenishment, they will run dry and be of little use to anyone.

So, who will be caring of the caring school leader? Where will the caring school leader find sources of replenishment? This question is important to ask during the regular course of school life. It is imperative to ask in times of crisis when the need, the caring work, and the stakes intensify.

School leaders are presumed to be the ones caring—of students, of teachers and staff, of families, of their school communities, even of the neighborhoods surrounding their schools. Yet, there is often little recognition of their need for care and support. Perhaps it is assumed that they have adequate sources of care readily available. But this is not necessarily true. It is not uncommon that central offices provide little support for school leaders, invest little in their professional learning and development, and often, inadvertently, make decisions that cause school leaders' work to become more complicated and difficult. Many districts do not lead with caring but instead with dehumanizing precepts associated with bureaucracy.

Such situations leave school leaders alone to put aside their need for caring, seek caring from other sources, or look for effective means of self-care. The latter has received substantial attention lately. Although self-care can be vitally important, too much emphasis on it can, ironically, place additional burden and stress on the school leader. It can also relieve central offices and other care providers of a professional, indeed, a moral duty to care. *Cura te ipsum!* Physician, heal thyself!

Care and support of school leaders can come from many sources. It is safe to say that the school leaders' access to such sources varies widely. It is also safe to say that the quality and effectiveness of these sources vary. Many sources are available only through the self-initiating effort of the school leader or perhaps by the serendipity of time and place. It does not seem particularly caring, in crisis situations or in ordinary time, to make caring school leaders work to avail themselves of the care and support they may desperately need.

We raise the question “Who cares for the caring school leader?” not to answer it but to draw attention to it. We also raise the question as a challenge to central offices, boards, professional associations, and the profession at large. If we expect our school leaders to be caring of others, and if we expect school leaders to be particularly caring during times of crisis, we need to take seriously their need for care and support. If we do not, their pitchers will run dry. Students, teachers, staff, and families will not fully benefit from the care they can provide. And we will be derelict in our duty of care.

Sources of Care and Support for School Leaders

1. Family and friends
2. Clergy, clinicians, and other professional caregivers
3. Colleagues, students, and parents in the school community—indeed, the community of care that a caring school leader may cultivate for others
4. Formal and informal networks of school leaders
5. Central offices and boards
6. Leadership supervisors and coaches
7. Universities and other entities that prepare, develop, and support school leaders
8. Professional associations