

Compassion-Focused Strategies for Teachers

Teaching during this global crisis is undeniably challenging. Along with the regular demands of educating students, teachers are adopting new instructional approaches to educate students remotely and embedding new health and safety procedures into daily routines. Teachers are also supporting the social and emotional well-being of their students.

During these times of heightened stress and uncertainty, teachers' own mental and emotional well-being is essential. Practicing self-compassion and engaging in regular self-care can support coping with increased demands and pressures at work, at home, and help prevent burnout. Adults need to take care of their mental health and be well-regulated to support the growth and development of children and youth.

Strategies for Positive Mental Health and Self-Care

Practicing compassion towards yourself and others may help to decrease feelings of criticism and shame.



Redirect Your Thoughts

Experiencing worry, self-criticism, or worst-case scenario thinking? 'Flipping' thoughts can be helpful by seeing thoughts from a

different perspective and may make them less urgent or critical.



Mindfulness

Take a few moments, find a comfortable place to sit, and take several slow, deep breaths.

Notice as your breath flows in and out through your nose. Next, imagine the qualities you wish to develop to be kind to yourself (e.g., non-judgement, tolerating distress and unpredictability, empathy).

Finding it hard to imagine self-compassionate qualities? First try bringing to mind someone who made you feel accepted and understood. Next, think of what they did, said, or a way that they behaved that made you feel their compassion (e.g., a calm, warm tone of voice, listening instead of judging, and acceptance instead of criticism).

Mindfulness and meditation apps:

- Calm
- Mindshift
- Insight Timer
- Smiling Mind

Fees may apply for some apps.

A stressful thought	Flipping the thought
"The students were so disruptive today, I didn't get time to finish my language lesson."	"My students needed my extra support to help them focus today, and we can finish the lesson another day."
"I am so stressed and busy, I'll never finish my marking."	"I am doing my best to make my students feel safe and supported. It is ok if marking takes longer."



Positive Affirmations

Try saying aloud, or writing down, a positive statement about yourself each day. Examples are:

- 'I deserve good things.'
- 'I have tried my best!'

Looking for more affirmations? The 'I am' app contains daily positive affirmations, which may support you in this practice.



Gratitude and Optimism

Cultivate a practice of optimism by keeping a journal to note things you are grateful for at the beginning or end of the day or writing a letter of gratitude to yourself or others (e.g. colleagues, students, family, or friends).

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Strategies for the Classroom

Practicing self-compassion in the classroom may include lowering standards or shifting expectations, such as not finishing a lesson as planned, or allowing more time to review previously learned concepts.



Reflection, Resolution & Reconciliation

Use the 'three R's' to address challenging student behaviour. You can do this by maintaining clear, consistent, developmentally appropriate boundaries which is especially important during times of uncertainty and helps support students' feelings of safety and predictability at school. This approach helps behaviours from intensifying.

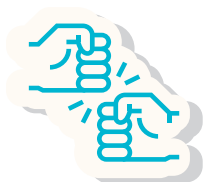
A possible scenario:

A student engages in disruptive behaviour during a lesson and has known academic and behavioural challenges.

(1) Reflect on possible reasons (e.g., the work might be too hard, the child slept poorly, difficulties at home, or had a challenging morning transition).

(2) Resolve. Use your classroom behaviour management strategy consistently.

(3) Reconciliation. Check-in with the student, acknowledge their difficulty and discuss how you can help support them to have a better day.



Focus on Relationships with Students

Given the uncertainty of the current climate, reducing student workload and emphasizing compassion, connection, and empathy will be important to supporting resilience in students and teachers.

Strategies for the (Virtual) Staff Room



Connect with Others

Physical distancing and public health guidelines might mean reduced ways to connect with colleagues in-person. However, peer support and social/emotional connection is essential to our everyday mental health and well-being.

Connect with colleagues, even briefly, each day, whether through an email or hosting an end of day check-in online.

Avoid spending extended periods discussing COVID-19, which may lead to increased stress and feelings of worry.

Resources

The Compassionate Mind Foundation: www.compassionatemind.co.uk/resources/exercises

Edutopia: www.edutopia.org/article/compassion-classroom-management-tool

Making Caring Common Project: mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-educators/how-build-empathy-strengthen-school-community

Positive Psychology: www.positivepsychology.com