



Taking Care of the Teachers

Being a teacher right now is hard. On the best days, teachers facilitate compassion, creativity, and high-level learning, and on the worst, they are fatigued with feelings of overwhelm and burnout. Often those days are one in the same.

The current pandemic is impacting more than your ability to teach; it's impacting you. Many teachers ended last school year in crisis mode and started this year with uncertainty, without having the summer to renew and restore. Whether engaging in remote learning, in-person learning, or a combination of the two, teachers are struggling to find time to grieve the multitude of losses they have experienced. Amid the myriad of loss experiences, the new and ever-changing expectations teachers are facing make it difficult to find time to take care of themselves and feel okay about doing so.

Take Care of YOU, Tend to Your Relationships

Teachers join the profession because they care deeply about students. Sometimes caring for one's students takes up so much space that there is nothing left for self-care. Increasing job demands, concerns for personal (and others') safety, and increased difficulty in finding meaningful separation between work-life and home-life, requires intentional self-care.

Say "no" sometimes. No explanation required.	Identify your work and non-work support system.	Set (and stick to) limits on work-time.	Engage in activities that bring you joy.
Rest.	Let go of what you have no control over.	Engage in collective self-care.	Find ways to release AND restore daily.

In addition to facing an increase in already-high demands, teachers are asked to shoulder a heavy relational burden. Teachers play an integral role in the support system of others but must also find time for their own restoration and connection. Taking care of one's self deserves to be at the top of the priority list.

I matter.	Setting boundaries is okay.
My emotions matter.	I will make time to rest.
My mental health matters.	I will take time off.

When You Only Have a Few Minutes

Teachers are BUSY. And you can still incorporate moments of self-compassion throughout your day. These strategies will help release and restore your energy.

Engage in a "Cactus Arms" Stretch Break

- With your elbows bent at 90 degrees, open your arms out to the side.
- Squeeze your shoulder blades together, allow your chest to open.
- Hold for 5-10 breaths, breathing deeply.

Intentional Use of Sound

- Allow yourself a few moments of stillness by sitting in silence or listening to low-volume music.
- Create a beat with whatever is near you - pens, a spoon, or your hands and feet.
- Turn on a song that matches your mood, and sing or dance.

Draw or Write

- Create a five-word poem about how your day is going.
- Let those feelings out! Try drawing how you feel with your non-dominant hand.
- Draw or write about why you do this work.

Moments of Gratitude

- Celebrate small victories. Pause throughout the day and acknowledge little things that went right.
- Build gratitude into your day (e.g. end classes having students share one thing they are grateful for).
- Search for and participate in a brief mindfulness video on YouTube.

Care for Your Whole Self

When working in a helping profession, such as teaching, it can be easy to put the needs of students ahead of your own. Consider identifying a couple of small ways to tend to yourself as essential activities. After all, teachers are essential.

Mind

- Spend time in nature (e.g. take a long walk)
- Practice self-compassion

Body

- Dance and/or sing loudly
- Engage in a type of exercise that feels good to you

Emotions

- Talk about uncomfortable emotions with someone you trust
- Spend time without technology

Spirit

- Use an app to support you (e.g. Headspace, Calm)
- Engage in mindfulness or prayer

Work

- Share about challenging situations
- Dedicate hours in the day as "no work zones"

Relationships

- Plan something FUN with a person you enjoy or care about
- Share honestly