

# Caring for Yourself as You Support Your Students



The start of this school year will likely feel chaotic and stressful - even more than usual.

We are here to support you in taking good care of yourself during this hectic time, and to remind you of your own ability to model calm and flexibility for your students.

Students are learning a critical life lesson right now: *how do we adapt to changing and scary circumstances?* One of the best ways for your students to learn how to care for themselves in challenging times is to observe what that looks like by watching you taking good care of yourself.

Prioritize your own self care, whatever it looks like for you, and talk openly about that with your students - "I felt so overwhelmed and angry yesterday, going for a run helped me feel better."

Consider instituting a regular self care check in during your time with students. Brainstorming ideas and hearing about what you and their classmates are doing will help students see that self care can take many different forms.

In this time of uncertainty, your consistent and calm presence itself is a comfort to your students. Release some of the pressure you might feel to have everything perfectly planned and executed.

Clearly designate what are working hours and non-working hours. If you are working more from home, it is easy to blur these lines and have work time spill into personal time. Be fierce and unapologetic about protecting yourself from the burnout that can result from being available at all times.

Set regular check in times for you and your colleagues. Being open and vulnerable with trusted people going through a similar experience is a huge protector of our mental health. Make time to laugh, voice frustrations, and encourage each other.

Remember that this chaotic time during the pandemic will be temporary. Allow yourself some time to feel angry or afraid when you need to. Identify any positive changes or shifts that this period of time has brought to your life that you would like to hold on to, and take comfort in the fact that you will be able to let go of the other more challenging pieces in time.

**Never forget your innate ability to make a difference for a student simply by being present and modeling confidence and calm. Here is how your students see you:**

*"One of my school counselors would tell me how proud my Dad would be of me. I liked how they didn't forget that my Dad died and also didn't avoid the topic."*

*I had a teacher who left her door open for me every day after my sister died. She told me I could come in any time, and she meant it. Sometimes I just sat and cried. She never let me feel alone, no matter what kind of day I was having. She helped me learn to honor my sister in small ways and to talk about her when I was ready.*

*"When one of my favorite teachers died by suicide, I was really hurting. I was a shy quiet student and didn't like to ask for help. One of my teachers noticed this, she sat with me. She listened and gave me a safe place to be. She told me that she felt that way too and didn't have all the answers. I won't ever forget her kindness."*



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