

# Strategies for Districts to Support Self-Care for Educators During the COVID-19 Pandemic

## SUPPORTING HEALTHY MINDSETS AND BEHAVIOR

### What is Self-Care?

It is giving attention to our own physical and psychological health and actively preserving, protecting, and improving it.

### Why is it Important?

1. Reduces the impact of stress and burnout
2. Improves motivation, emotions, and relationships
3. Supports student success and well-being

## SELF-AWARENESS

Cultivate knowledge of one's character, feelings, behaviors, and motives.

### *Examine Thoughts & Feelings*

It is essential for us to be aware of and accept our own thoughts and feelings and adjust our actions accordingly. It is also important to feel our feelings, but not become them.

#### What you can do

Provide space for others to talk and process their feelings before diving into new tasks.

### *Stay Calm & Focused*

Mindfulness practices can reduce emotional reactivity and support decisionmaking. Mind-body strategies include sitting or walking in nature, physical exercise, or talking with a good friend.

#### What you can do

Model mindfulness during your conversations with others. Before concluding, ask: "What are you doing to take care of yourself?"

### *Be Aware of Self-Storytelling*

Become aware of the stories you're telling yourself about the circumstances and question whether your thoughts are realistic or fear-based. If your thoughts are rooted in fear, give yourself permission to not force or push things.

#### What you can do

When you are feeling stressed, consider ways to reschedule or reconnect when your mind is feeling steadier and more stable. Encourage others to do the same.

### *Recognize Contagious Emotions*

Do your best to keep fear and panic contained by modeling calmness and expressing optimism. How you feel will guide your interactions and can have a significant influence on how others feel and respond.

#### What you can do

Before you react, pause, take a breath, and notice the thoughts in your mind and the sensations in our body. Give yourself a moment (or more) to relax before responding or making a decision.

## OPTIMISTIC AND SOLUTION-FOCUSED

Focus on the positive and try to minimize judgement.

### *Take a Solution-Focused Approach*

Avoid “analysis paralysis” and start searching for solutions. Focus conversations on thinking through options, challenging previously held beliefs, considering other perspectives, or reframing issues.

#### What you can do

Remind yourself that where there is a problem there is a solution. Explore what is causing the problem, separate it from people, and formulate a plan to try to resolve it.

### *Shift from Pessimism to Optimism*

Immediately challenge thoughts of “can’t” by redirecting your focus to what you do like and want to do.

#### What you can do

Practice reframing. Instead of focusing on the negative (“I’m forced to stay isolated”) try focusing on the positive (“We’re keeping each other safe”).

### *Find Opportunities & Meaning*

Look for opportunities in the challenges. Search for meaning in the lessons emerging from the challenges and uncertainties.

#### What you can do

Ask, “What are we learning?” Encourage school staff to look ahead and apply what they are learning now to future scenarios.

### *Practice Gratitude*

Take time to express appreciation and gratitude.

#### What you can do

Ideas include writing gratitude, speaking your appreciation, or posting positive messages on social media.

### *Demonstrate Compassion*

Connect with others through active listening, seeking to understand rather than be understood, and strengthen feelings of concern for others. Compassion for yourself is also important. Be kind and speak to yourself the way you would a dear friend.

#### What you can do

Take time to get to know colleagues, show kindness by offering to help or with words of encouragement, notice verbal and nonverbal indicators of emotional well-being, ensure safety and trust in your relationship.

**At the end of the day, we’re all doing the best we can with what we know, what we have, and where we are in life.  
Try not to judge or shame yourself.**