

Making Space for Ourselves

Self-care is caring for and having a healthy and caring relationship with yourself. To do this, you can create healthy habits that, in turn, maintain your well-being.

As an educator it is important to remember to practice and model self-care. The passion that draws you to your work can sometimes be the driver of your burn out. Sometimes the things you see and are involved with at work can have a lasting impact on you even outside of the workplace. You may even carry them home with you, initially not noticing it, and realizing later on.

Practicing self-care will allow you to prioritize your emotional health so that you can continue to provide full attention and focus at work to support students and other staff in the building. It will allow you to be more present and in turn, impactful, in your line of work.

1 Set Boundaries



Many people in caring roles have a hard time saying no or recognizing when they have too much on their plates. Learn how to recognize your stressors and what your threshold is by setting priorities and working towards a sustainable work-life balance. Remember it will take practice.

2 Have a Toolkit



Having a toolkit in place will allow you to create healthy habits, rather than trying to find last minute solutions when you are stressed or overwhelmed. Be proactive!

To have a well-rounded toolkit, it is best to have at least one activity from each category below. Self-care does not look the same for everyone: people can practice different types of healthy activities that can reduce stress. Everyone is different, what matters is to have tools that work for YOU!

Energize

Physical activity can help clear your mind, boost your energy and confidence to take on the day or simply just an upcoming task.

Be active and fit a workout in: Exercising can improve your mood, energy levels and reduce stress levels. You can go to a gym, take a fitness class, or even workout in the comfort of your own home.

Stretch: Stretching calms your mind and releases tension.



Unwind

- Find activities that help you relax and renew. Allow your mind to take a break.
- Reading can help you unplug from the things happening around you
- Meditating and thinking about your values and goals can help you find a positive and fresh perspective on things, especially on your job and why you love doing it.
- Listening to music can improve your mood and reduce anxiety. Put your favorite playlist on!
- Get a good night's sleep: Being well rested can positively influence your memory, concentration, and energy.



Be present

- During busy times you may only have a minute or two to yourself. It's important to know what tools help you manage and through stressful situations.
- Take a mindfulness break to reduce stress, improve concentration and decrease anxiety. Take a few deep breaths or spend some time coloring!
- Go outside for some fresh air. Even if you only have a few minutes, the change of environment or scenery can provide a break.
- Keep a journal to jot down how you are currently feeling to help you release, and move forward. No journal? Use a post-it!



3 Create a positive space around you:

Healthy spaces will foster positive outcomes during stressful moments and provide the support you need to move forward



With your colleagues

It is likely that a lot of people at work are feeling the same way you are. To create a healthier workplace, find support amongst your colleagues. It will feel good to release what you are feeling. Having a support system in place can be beneficial. As a group celebrate successes, even if they might seem small. Participate in activities together, set group goals or plan staff lunches.

Set self-care goals as a group and encourage one another to practice self-care consistently.

This will create accountability amongst each other. If you set a goal and have someone hold you accountable, you are more likely to stay on track. If everyone on your team supports one another and practices self-care, the quality of your work environment will increase.



In your home

It is important to incorporate self-care at home and in your personal life. The things you see and are involved in at work can continue to have an impact on you and how you feel even after the workday is over. It can be helpful to have a cue for yourself that will help you make the distinction that you are no longer at work. It does not matter what the cue is, as long as it works for you.

It can be creating a peace corner that you go directly to when you get home. What is key is to add and practice self-care to your day whether it is when you wake up in the morning, when you get home from work or before going to bed. Keeping consistent rituals and practices are key!

Additional Support

Individuals in caring roles, such as educators, are often exposed to difficult situations that can become stressors and triggers. Seeking additional support can better help you understand your own triggers and identify healthy coping skills.

Learn about secondary trauma stress and its impact on teachers through "Support for Teachers Affected by Trauma" at www.statprogram.org

