NOVEMBER 2020

Trauma Responsive Educator

Strengthening the capacity of educators to meet the needs of students coping with trauma

Focusing on the Here and Now

By Micere Keels, Jamilah D. Bowden & Stacy Williams

TREPEducator.org/magazine

Project Director's Note

In this professional development resource we're focusing on ensuring that remote learning is responsive to the needs of students coping with trauma and high levels of stress.

Paying attention to the needs of vulnerable students whose parents and caregivers are unable to replicate a school-like learning environment at home. Vulnerable students who can't join a learning pod with a qualified teacher or tutor, students who are dependent on you—their now distant classroom teacher. We're also paying attention to students who are in unsafe contexts and are dependent on you to recognize and respond to signs of distress in the remote learning environment.

Attending to these issues is critical for buffering against what many are calling a lost year of learning for vulnerable students.

This is a mammoth task that none of us were trained for, especially those of you in hybrid learning contexts who are simultaneously teaching students in your classroom along with those logging on from home. Self- and collective-care are more important now than ever before, intentional moments of pause and recovery will enable you to continue showing up for your students and your colleagues, for your families and your friends, and for yourselves.

Micere Keels

In This Issue

The Here and Now

Remote learning means students have to find ways to focus on academic learning while also coping with a lot of stress and instability. This places huge demands on their executive functioning, especially their academic self-regulation. Therefore, the more that you can do to embed self-regulation supports into remote learning, the more likely your students will experience academic success this year.

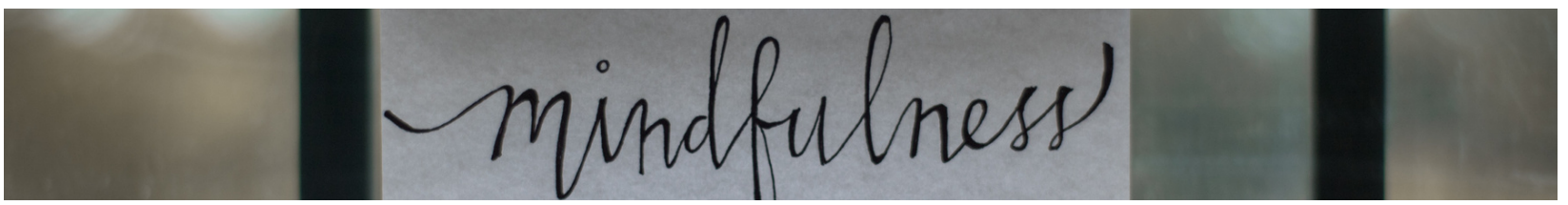
Remote learning often asks students to manage their own learning process, in addition to learning the content. This is a heavy cognitive load that often results in shallow learning and limited retention of academic content. Educators can make remote learning trauma responsive by being very intentional about leveraging the technology to minimize the cognitive load in the learning environment.

There are a few trauma specific considerations to keep in mind as you think about how students are being affected:

- Children coping with the highest levels of trauma are also the ones **most likely to be in homes that are unable to create a school-like learning environment**. This means that they require considerable behavioral supports, each and every day, to engage with extended periods of structured learning.

- Children coping with the highest levels of trauma are also the ones **least likely to have caregivers who can provide the academic regulation** and motivation that teachers do in the classroom.

- High self-regulation demands → induce anxiety → trigger the stress response system → prevent students from being in their learning brain. Therefore, it is critical that you provide self-regulation supports.



Traumatic events affect each of us in varied and individualized ways. Even if your students were all similarly impacted by COVID-19 (and they haven't been), you should expect their emotional and behavioral responses to vary. Their coping responses will differ based on their life stories and individual temperaments. Getting a good sense of who your students are will help you understand why they behave so differently in response to stress.

Introverted children may become overly quiet, unresponsive at times, and minimize their emotional expressions. Gregarious children may appear unaffected and want to proceed as usual. Responding appropriately requires getting to know your students, making careful observations about their baseline behavior, noticing when their usual way of being changes, and asking questions when their emotional and behavioral reactions change significantly.

You should also expect day-to-day fluctuations in students' emotions and behaviors. Any given student may display substantial differences in their behavior from one day to the next, depending on what may have happened to trigger their stress reactions. Memories of and feelings about bad things happening in their lives can come and go in waves, which you may observe as dramatic fluctuations in their classroom engagement and compliance with rules.

To support you in creating a remote learning classroom that is responsive to the collective and individualized needs of students coping with trauma, we've done some thinking about what may matter most.

First: The classroom community matters just as much and likely even more in remote learning than in-person learning.

Second: Remote learning places huge demands on self-regulation, and technology can be used to increase the likelihood that vulnerable students will be engaged and learn.

Third: Because educators are the group of adults most likely to recognize and report potential signs of abuse and other forms of interpersonal trauma, it's critical that we learn how to identify and respond to the signs and symptoms of trauma in the remote learning context.

While there are many aspects of this crisis we cannot control, we can cultivate a mindset of possibilities and then use that perspective to guide how we respond. Try viewing this current challenge through a lens of possibility, rather than becoming immobilized by what has been lost.

Safety is Still Primary

Many of the important factors for creating an in-person classroom context conducive to learning are also important for the remote classroom. They just have to be implemented differently. The remote learning environment is still a social context. Learning will continue to depend on interpersonal relationships between you and your students, between students and their peers, and between students and those in their homes who are now part of the learning environment.

During social distancing, school closures, shelter-in-place, and now this extended period of remote learning, students have faced substantial stress and many have had limited access to psychological and emotional support. Understanding students' feelings of safety will be especially important to make sure you have not only their physical presence in the remote classroom, but also their cognitive attention.

The physical safety questions are daunting: Do they have stable housing? Do they have adequate food and heat? Do they feel safe with the people in their home? Do they have a quiet space that they can claim as their own when they are logging into class? Since you have little control over their physical safety, maximize their psychological safety during the time they are in your remote classroom by cultivating a sense of belonging and connectedness to a school community that values who they are.

Trauma Continues and the Educator's Role Remains the Same

During this period of remote learning, many of the principles that mattered for engaging with students who may have experienced traumatic events remain the same. This includes making sure students feel seen and heard; making sure they know they can confide in you; helping students make sense of difficult events without any blame or shame; and helping students find strength, courage, and hope for the future.

Making sure children feel seen and heard is one of your primary tasks because often, children who experience trauma and adversity feel they're alone. Because of the shame and silence that comes with traumatic experiences, including economic traumas like housing and food insecurity, children often believe they're the only

ones who have experienced what they have. It's also common for children to believe tragic events or family distress are somehow their fault—that they contributed to it with their thoughts, feelings, or actions; and that something is wrong with them. These feelings are intensified when the adults in their lives (including their educators) are reluctant to ask about their visible signs of distress.

While acknowledging the challenges that it creates for you and other students in the classroom, remember that acting out behavior, in-person or online, could possibly be an attempt by the student to be seen and heard. Often acting out behaviors are hints that something has been missed and questions need to be asked. Some children will attempt to be seen by disappearing from the classroom, in hopes they will be missed and someone will ask about what may be the cause of their absence.

Many young people who experienced abuse report that they never told, simply because no one ever asked. They were hoping for, and in many cases, depending on a teacher or other adult at school to notice and initiate the discussion.

Making sure they know they can confide in you and giving a "good enough" response in the moment is what students in distress need from their teachers. Students don't want or need you to become their therapist, ***they need you to understand*** just enough about what is happening in their lives to connect them with the appropriate mental and emotional health support staff member, and ***provide*** them with encouragement and individualized learning adjustments that will enable them to persevere and persist in school, as they attempt to manage what is happening outside of school.

Many educators don't ask because they're afraid they won't have the right words. A "good enough" response first and foremost validates a student's distress and their decision to disclose their trauma. Your students will be experiencing tremendous fear and uncertainty about whether or not opening up to you is the right thing to do. They could be concerned about how they will be judged, or what will happen next.

By helping students make sense of difficult events without any blame or shame you will be engaging in actions that reduce the likelihood of a traumatic event leading to long term traumatization. Children and youth will find ways to blame themselves for the bad things that happen in their lives. In many ways, this is developmentally appropriate because they are in an egocentric stage of development. Children in this stage are preoccupied with their own needs and experiences and do not yet realize other people have differing realities. The world feels like an extension of themselves. Self-blame and shame are common especially when their family's experiences feel different from others. They need adults to help them see and believe that there isn't anything wrong with them.

Remember, they don't need you to be their therapist. You just have to be willing to initiate a conversation and then let the student lead. Letting the student lead may mean all that happens in the conversation is the student learns you recognize they are experiencing some difficulties, that you care, and you are available to support as best you can. Letting the student lead also means listening carefully and correcting misconceptions about self-blame, without adding too many details based on what you may know.

Helping students find strength, courage, and hope for the future is one of the daily acts that you can do in your role as an educator. A strength-based approach to responding to student disclosures of abuse, begins when you acknowledge how courageous they have been in reaching out for help.

Point out that all the strength and courage they used to tell you, will continue to guide them as they are supported through the trauma. In the days, weeks, and months ahead it's important to guard against defining the student by their trauma. Educators must balance the acknowledgment that traumatic experiences are developmentally damaging with the fact that teaching the whole student is still your primary objective. While trauma is damaging, children are resilient. Success at school continues to be one of the primary factors that determine the quality of one's adulthood. Dr. Shawn Ginwright calls this healing-centered engagement in schools.

The "good enough" response reassures students experiencing trauma that:

1. It is okay to confide in their teacher
2. There is no shame or blame in what they are going through
3. Someone will be there to help them with what comes next

Even if you stumble over your choice of words, that is far better than your silence.

Building Relationships with Students You've Never Met In-Person

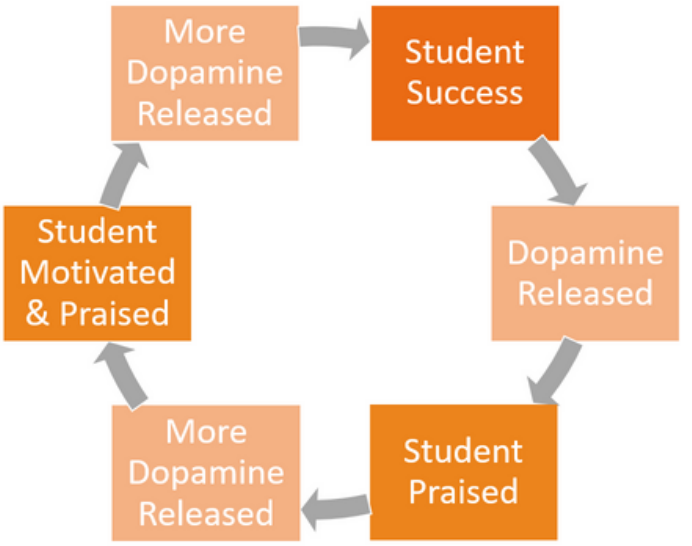
Among the many things that are different this academic year, one is that most educators will have no in-person experiences with their new cohort of students, and will have to learn about them and connect with them entirely through the remote learning environment.

Overnight, educators lost access to casual conversations with students in class and between classes. Showing expressions of care through real-time, decoding and responding to students' facial expressions, body language, and verbal tone are less effective in remote learning. The pandemic has become an unforeseen test for teacher-student relationships, requiring major readjustments in the absence of familiar ways of getting to know one another.

Invest some time in reviewing your teacher-student relationships and the peer-to-peer relationships in your classroom and gather new ideas for how to strengthen your classroom community. How educators build relationships with students, and help them to build relationships with each other, will play a substantial role in determining whether students feel a genuine sense of belonging, and wanting to (versus having to) be present in your remote classroom.

Positive relationships are built on the accumulation of many **small positive interactions** and each of these interactions has a powerful effect on the brain. With each positive interaction the student's brain releases dopamine—whether it's delivering authentic praise or helping them experience success on an assignment. This interaction creates a positive feedback cycle.

The student's brain releases dopamine. The student feels good and is motivated to feel that way again. With this increased motivation, students spend more time and attention working on a skill. They build those skills. You give more praise—sparking the release of more dopamine. And the cycle starts all over again.



Without the accumulation of these positive interactions that are more likely to occur when students and teachers are in the same physical space, students are at-risk for becoming disengaged.

When students trust, respect, and like their teachers, they go the extra mile, take risks, and allow themselves to be vulnerable.

5 Resources for Relationship Building in Remote Learning

1. Building Connectedness Virtually: Slide presentation that will build your toolbox of strategies for using technology to build connections with students and their families.

2. A Place of (Remote) Belonging: Strategies for creating a virtual learning community.

3. 10 Steps to incorporating Student Voice Into Remote Learning: Strategies for giving students some control, voice, and choice to keep them meaningfully engaged during this period when students may feel that they have lost choice in their learning experiences.

4. Building Connections During Distance Learning: SEL strategies for the virtual space to create consistency and predictability for students.

5. Relationship Mapping Strategy (New Version!): Relationship mapping invests time in making sure that every student is known by at least one adult.

Creating a Community of Learners Eases Self-Regulation Burdens

Remote learning leaves many students feeling like they are alone in their learning process. This can happen when there is little to no back-and-forth in teacher-student and student-student interactions during synchronous classes, and when asynchronous learning does not include enough opportunities for interactive discussion threads. When students feel isolated in their remote learning environment, learning progression is heavily dependent on their individual academic self-direction and self-regulation.

Remote learning is your opportunity to take advantage of the fact that today's generation of children and youth have been surrounded by digital devices and have been connecting online since they were toddlers.

Be more intentional than ever before about making space for formally integrating relationship strategies into your daily lesson plans—this applies to relationships between students and between you and your students.

Today's generation of children are primed for connecting with you in asynchronous learning, but first you need to ensure that your virtual classroom has a strong social presence. Classroom community building is also about how you **project yourself into the learning environment.** Have you created a remote learning classroom and avatar that projects your personality into the virtual environment so that students will feel like they're interacting with you even when you're not there?

Check out these ideas for remote classroom personalization:

- Teachers Are Creating Their Own Avatar Classrooms
- Creating Avatars - Technology Resources for Teachers
- Speaking Characters for Education
- Virtual Teacher Backgrounds for Online Teaching

Like the in-person classroom context, your students' sense of you as a person beyond your formal role as their teacher will matter for their investment in learning from you.

Invest in Hooking and Motivating Students Before Focusing on Content

Motivation matters. When students are highly motivated to learn and accomplish something, especially if they are motivated by intrinsic factors such as anticipated satisfaction of mastering the topic and genuine curiosity about the topic, they will persist and find creative solutions to obstacles that arise. Conversely, when students are not motivated or can't see the point of a particular lesson or assignment you have to provide external motivators and make each step as easy as possible to push students along a learning trajectory.

In remote learning your ability to push students has been minimized, so your strategies for motivating students must be maximized.

Links to resources to integrate community building into remote learning!

1. Reach out and check-in with parents and students
2. Focus live instructional time on interactions such as discussions and reflections
3. Include time in the schedule for connecting such as virtual morning meetings

Identify and insert motivational hooks into your lesson plan with the goal of getting students to **actively choose** to invest their time, talent, and energy in learning academic content. The following emotional learning principles can guide the emotional components of your instructional planning:

SOCIAL EMOTIONS attend to the fact that students are more engaged when they feel connected to their teachers and peers in the learning process. Some of these emotions include compassion, envy, sympathy, anger, and anxiety.

- Plan for whole class verbal check-ins about the learning process and the content with interactive strategies like "whip-arounds" and "pop-corn".
- Send individual check-in notes in recognition of signs they're struggling with an assignment along with words of encouragement and scheduling learning support opportunities.
- Schedule whole class silent survey check-ins where students can quickly show you how they're feeling or their understanding of the content.

ACHIEVEMENT EMOTIONS are associated with the sense of accomplishment that motivates students to keep learning. If they experience academic failure the associated negative emotions will have the opposite effect. Achievement emotions include pride, hope, joy, anxiety, shame, fear of failure, and stress.

- Identify students who have yet to experience success or mastery on a lesson or assignment and create an opportunity for them to experience success in your classroom.
- Provide opportunities and feedback that enable students to be rewarded for effort and persistence, not just completion and achievement.
- Determine whether a given student is feeling fear or lacking self-confidence in engaging in classroom activities or homework assignments and actively build their academic self-confidence.

TOPIC EMOTIONS are associated with students seeing themselves and their life experiences in the academic content and feel a personal connection to what they're learning and are more motivated to learn. Some of these emotions include excitement, connection, interest, and curiosity.

- Learn about the life and cultural experiences of the students in your classroom and ensure that your academic lessons connect to who students are.
- Provide space and opportunities for students to engage in homework assignments in ways that interest them, and reveal more about who they are as individuals.
- Solicit student feedback on their level of engagement with and feelings of connection to the academic content, and make adjustments based on their feedback.

Assessing Prior Knowledge in the Remote Classroom

Prior knowledge is a critical component of the amount of cognitive load involved in learning new content. When students have the prerequisite prior knowledge that your lesson is building on, they're more likely to make inferences and build on prior knowledge. However, those without prior knowledge often use less higher domain skills such as making inferences, drawing conclusions, summarizing and note-taking.

During in-person learning it's easier to assess student knowledge and fill in gaps while you're teaching. You can integrate this into remote learning by beginning new units with brief ungraded assessments of prior knowledge to aid lesson planning and the development of asynchronous learning components.

Utilize with care because students coping with trauma are often hyper sensitive to negative messages about their abilities. It will be important to make assessments of prior learning informal and ungraded so students who are struggling with their self-image and sense of themselves as learners don't feel defeated at the outset of a new learning unit.

Use Mindfulness to Transport Students into the Remote Classroom

Mindfulness can be thought of as a form of environment management, which is the extent to which students control and avoid potential distractions. Mindfulness is an external self-regulation support that you can include at the start of each lesson as a consistent and predictable way of bringing students into the learning environment.

Most educators are now aware of the importance and benefits of integrating mindfulness into their classroom, so we will focus on providing you with a range of resources that will enable you to get started right away. Thankfully, there are many videos and digital resources that will enable you to integrate mindfulness into synchronous and asynchronous learning without having to become an expert yourself.

Beginning your synchronous classes with mindfulness will also boost your ability to be present with your students and manage Zoom fatigue. Many of you are probably rushing to busy your own children, putting pets in another room, asking the other adults in your home to quiet down, and double checking what can be seen in your background before logging on. You need to engage in the start of class mindfulness activity along with your students to help those many distractions fade into the background.

Digitally integrating mindfulness into the start of each asynchronous and synchronous lesson can facilitate the process of transporting and transitioning students' attention, and your attention, into the virtual learning environment, reduce stress, and increase the retention of learning.

Here are a few resources to get you started, search online to find many more videos that match the needs of your students.

- **Brief Mindfulness Exercises** (all grade levels) that can be integrated into the start of remote or in-person classes to get students centered and focused on the present moment.

- **Breathe Think Do Sesame** (grades PreK – 1) is a free app that can be used for whole-class instruction or can be individually as a one-on-one intervention to help students develop self-regulation skills.

- **Super Stretch Yoga HD** (grades PreK – 2) is a free app that uses storytelling and animation to help children practice mindfulness.

- **21 Days Mindfulness Bootcamp** (grades 2 - 8) are videos that can be used as an effective tool for introducing mindfulness to students and strengthening their practice.

- **Smiling Mind** (grades 7 – 12) is a free app that helps users learn how to pay attention to the present moment with openness, curiosity and without judgement.

- **Yoga Foster** (grades 2 - 12) has yoga and mindfulness videos as well as student worksheets and reflections that you can link in your lessons and integrate into your google classroom.

- **Guided Mindfulness Meditations** (grades 7 – 12) are videos that can be used to strengthen their practice.

Learn the Signs of Distress in the Remote Learning Setting

Social distancing places children living in potentially unsafe homes at greater risk of abuse and neglect. Not being able to physically separate from an unsafe home environment and build in-person relationships with their educators reduces the opportunities for students to disclose abuse and reach out for help. The list of cues below will help as you identify physical, behavioral, and emotional signs of distress.

Disclosing abuse is a very complex act. Many children don't have the words to describe what is happening to them or name the specific feelings they're having. So, it's even more important that educators are on the look-out for what is going to be an indirect series of clues or an unintentional disclosure, that may occur when a student is overcome by emotion and offers information or red flags about potential abuse.

CATEGORY OF ABUSE	POTENTIAL SIGNS TO LOOK AND LISTEN FOR ONLINE
All Types of Abuse and/or Neglect	• Change in a student's online baseline behavior, *which may be very different from their in-person baseline behavior* • Declines in academic performance or engagement • Hints or direct references to harm, violence, or death in written or artwork • Chronic complaints of stomach upset, headaches and other pains • Behavioral extremes (both passive and aggressive) • Fear reactions in the presence of (or at the mention of) a particular person • Constantly looking off to the side, as if to see if someone is watching • Stalls to get off live sessions after lessons are over
Physical Abuse	• Unexplained bruises and marks, bald spots, burns, cuts, scrapes • Complains of soreness or moves uncomfortably • Wears long sleeves even in hot weather and when sweating
Sexual Abuse and/or Exploitation	• Difficulty sitting or standing for entire lesson • Extreme weight or mood change • Signs of cutting behaviors (may start small with intentional scratches) • Inappropriate sexual references or seductive behavior or comments to peers • Pay attention to mentions of new friends or "new jobs" that don't add up
Neglect	• Regularly falls asleep in class or shows signs of listlessness • Medical needs left unattended, noticeably under-weight or emaciated • Consistently home alone or caring for younger siblings • Excessive attention-seeking
Emotional Abuse and/or Neglect	• Increased stuttering or other speech difficulties when caretaker is around • Repetitive self-soothing behaviors such as rocking and thumb sucking • Does not want to participate in fun activities or games

Talking with Children about Interpersonal Traumas

Interpersonal traumas are those events that occur between people, such as experiencing physical or sexual abuse, observing domestic violence, or feeling unsafe outside in one's neighborhood. All schools have a protocol for dealing with suspicions of such abuse or neglect and spend time and money assuring that staff is trained and know how to carry out that protocol. But, there are times when a student just wants to talk about how they're feeling or coping with what's going on in their lives. There's no straightforward protocol for these conversations.

It can be disconcerting to think about the difficult experiences that some children go through and even more uncomfortable to consider initiating conversations about it with students. So, it's important to check in with yourself first regarding your own level of anxiety or fear about what may come up during the conversation. Remind yourself that many children are relieved when someone takes the time to notice and ask about what's going on. It begins with an adult being courageous enough to ask, especially when we suspect that there may be a problem.

Do reach out to your school's counselor, dean, or other administrator who can help you think about next steps and brainstorm potential ways of reaching out to the student.

Before sharing some principles for conversations about interpersonal trauma, let's review some general Do's and Don'ts for interacting with students who have experienced traumatic events. The response of the first person a child opens up to, strongly impacts the way the child interprets what has happened, as well as how they will cope with their experience.

Practicing mindfulness can help educators to recognize and identify their triggers and emotional response patterns. Mindfully understanding ourselves is the first step to proactively regulating how we behave with students and colleagues. Additionally, the more you practice mindfulness for yourself the more likely you are to find creative ways to integrate it into your classroom, so check out these guided meditations for teachers:

- Morning Guided Meditation
- Mid-Day Guided Meditation
- Evening Guided Meditation

Some Do's and Don'ts for Interacting with Students Who Have Experienced Traumatic Events

DO	DON'T
Do Listen, intently and non-judgmentally, and minimize interruptions.	Don't try to investigate or provide counseling if this is not your role.
Believe the child. Take their fears and concerns seriously. It is normal for your initial reaction to be shock or denial, don't communicate them to the child.	Don't ask a lot of personal details or try to force a person to disclose. Once you have a suspicion or confirmation of anything abnormal or unsafe, turn it over to an administrator or counselor to investigate.
Reassure the child and emphasize that it's not their fault that something bad has happened to them. Remind students they do have adults at school they can talk to. They are not alone.	Don't tell the child what they could or should have done or ask questions that may lead the child to believe they were in any way at fault, such as, "Why didn't you tell me?" or "Why were you even there?"
Use a child-centered and strength-based approach in responding. Let them know how courageous they have been in coming forward and highlight their strengths.	Don't degrade or talk badly about the person who the child has identified as a perpetrator. Despite what has happened, this person may still be someone that the child loves or cares about.
Show compassionate emotions, while limiting the display of intense emotion, which can overwhelm a child and can cause them to not want to express their thoughts or emotions, out of concern for upsetting others.	Don't try to connect, using, "I know how you feel". This could distract from what the person is sharing, shifting their focus to ways in which you or others couldn't possibly understand the particulars of their experience.
Be patient and accept silence. If a student takes a long pause to gather thoughts, emotions, or words, allow them that space to do so, without breaking the silence out of your own discomfort.	Don't detract from the student's experience by talking about your own experiences at length.
Let students know, in words and actions, that all emotions are okay, instead of suggesting that they shouldn't feel a certain way. Let them express their fears and concerns.	Don't be afraid to admit you don't have an answer. State that you will find out or find someone who can help.
Be clear about the limits to confidentiality. Let them know that you may have to share some of this information with someone who can help more than you can, to try to keep them safe.	Don't try to fix the problem for the student or tell them what they need to do. It's more empowering to provide them with information and guide them through making their own decisions.

Remember, children are resilient and have an enormous capacity to heal, given the right support. Practice the conversation in your mind, aloud in the mirror, or with another adult to ease some of the anxiety. The following **principles for how to respond when students disclose** can help to prepare and guide you through.

REMAIN CALM

Take comfort in knowing that the student trusts you enough to share this sensitive information. Often, the act of finally sharing is an important part of healing in itself. The student is not necessarily looking for you to solve the problem. They're looking for you to hear them, accept what they are saying without judgment, and model for them an understanding that problems do have solutions.

Take gentle, deep breaths throughout the conversation.

REFLECTIVELY LISTEN

Listen attentively and non-judgmentally to the student. Rephrase what they are saying, to ensure that you're understanding them correctly.

"It sounds like you're saying..." (use a version of their own words)

RESPOND

- "I'm so sorry you're going through this."
- "It's not your fault."
- "I want to help make sure that you're safe, so I need to share this with ___. They know much more about how to help."

Thank the student for bravely sharing what is going on. Give an empathy statement, such as, "I'm sorry you are feeling this way" or "I'm sorry that you are having to experience this". Reassure the student that you and others at the school want them to be safe and are here to help. If you will be sharing this information with another staff member or if it falls under mandated reporting guidelines, let the student know that you will be reaching out to others for help. Refrain from making any promises, such as "Everything is going to be alright". If needed, make an appointment to check on the student later that day.

REACH OUT

Contact your school counselor, social worker, or principal, in accordance with your school's protocol. If the situation demands immediate attention, such as is in the case of suicidal and homicidal ideation, do not get off of the phone or video call with the student right away. Try to bring in a counselor, social worker, principal, or other support onto the call to assist, in the moment.

"I need some help with a student who has shared..."

REACH BACK

Structure reminders for yourself to reach back out to the student and family, as appropriate. If you have made an appointment or commitment to calling the student back, do everything in your power to uphold that commitment.

"I just wanted to check and see how you're doing. It was so brave of you to share."

Compassionate Self-Care is Not Optional

There is so much that needs doing and not enough time, resources, or control to get it done. Educators need to demonstrate daily acts of self-compassion to make it through this academic year. In the current online schooling environment, many educators are simultaneously attempting to provide continued learning for their students, provide care and learning for their own children and family members, while coping with any other personal losses that are occurring.

Educators are indeed in a unique and well-placed position to provide psychological and emotional support. However, this places educators on the frontlines, as the first adults that students might open up to about what may be happening in their lives. They will hear students' first-hand accounts of tragic situations and will have little power to intervene. This places them at high risk for secondary traumatic stress.

It's also likely that remote learning is increasing educators' emotional labor—the emotional work they have to do to be in tune with their students, adjust their teaching practices to respond to students' level of engagement with the lesson, and determine when and how to re-teach depending on whether they think students' are "getting it."

As detailed in a Health.com article, video conferencing (video teaching) is draining:

> *"When we're on Zoom or another type of video chat, the brain has to work overtime to process the information. "It isn't picking up the social cues it's used to identifying," explains Wind. "This places stress on the mind and uses up a lot of energy, which is why you might feel exhausted or stressed after a long Zoom call."*
>
> *And then there's the experience of seeing ourselves on screen—something we generally don't deal with when we interact with people in person. "This creates a feeling of being on stage and is often accompanied by a compulsion to perform, which also requires more energy than a simple interaction,"*

Self-compassion is the act of engaging in the conscious and intentional choice to momentarily silence our inner critic and replace that voice with one that communicates gratitude for our small wins; and understanding for the things still undone. Self-compassion is a necessary skill to be cultivated to buffer against the negative physical and mental health consequences of chronic stress.

Think of compassionate self-care as...

Taking time to intentionally do less for a time, so that you can better address your tasks and responsibilities	**Taking time to connect with yourself to be able to share more of yourself with your students**	**Taking time to clear your mind and reassess your values to create a rewarding and sustainable career**

Self-compassion is directing the care that you give to others towards yourself. This includes practicing self-kindness, which is acknowledging that everyone in life, including you, has challenges. It is acknowledging your shared humanity; which is intentionally reminding yourself of our shared imperfections as human beings. It is practicing mindfulness to bring greater non-judgmental awareness to your present thoughts and feelings.

Express Daily Gratitude

Name three things that you are grateful for at the beginning or end of the day.

Choose Health

Give yourself the permission to make and go to physical and mental health appointments.

Purposefully Unplug

Be in the moment during an activity that you enjoy by disconnecting from your phone.

Take Deep Breaths Regularly

Start a breath mantra to be completed throughout the day. Try slowly saying to yourself "breathe in, breathe out" three times a day.

Set Emotional Boundaries

Tune into your feelings and begin to acknowledge and name your limits.

Self-care should be coupled with collective care because professional stress is best managed with the support of your colleagues. ***It's critical that you guard against professional isolation and make sure to maintain your relationships with colleagues during this time of remote learning.***

A group of educators sharing their experience and wisdom helps alleviate the isolation of remote teaching and high potential for burnout, as you attempt to manage rapidly changing demands. It's also helpful to know others are struggling with the same issues to help minimize feelings of incompetence, as you are now expected to adapt your practices to a new learning environment while continuing to meet students' social, emotional, and academic needs.

In Case You Missed It...

Ongoing Police Violence Is Devastating to the Mental Health of Black Children and Youth: Here's How You Can Support Them in Your Professional Role as an Educator

Micere Keels is the founding director of the *Trauma Responsive Educational Practices (TREP) Project* and an Associate Professor in the Dept. of Comparative Human Development at the University of Chicago.
Jamilah D. Bowden is a Trauma Specialist, a practicing Licensed Professional Counselor, veteran educator, and School Coach with the TREP Project.
Stacy Williams is a career educator specializing in trauma and resilience in education and a School Coach with the TREP Project.

About the TREP Project

The TREP Project is a research-practice translation project that works to connect research on the science of trauma with the realities of school and classroom management. We aim to create schools and classrooms that can meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of students coping with toxic levels of stress and trauma.