

Educators, there is much to do during the school day, then grading assignments and homework after the school day, and then often taking time during breaks in the academic year to plan for when you return. This is why you must be intentional about using self-care to mitigate exhaustion and burnout. During this winter break take time for compassionate self-care. To facilitate this, we offer some guiding thoughts.

## Think of self-care as...

<p><b>Taking time to intentionally do less for a time so that you can better address your tasks and responsibilities</b></p>	<p><b>Taking time to connect with yourself to be able to share more of yourself with your students</b></p>	<p><b>Taking time to clear your mind and reassess your values to create a rewarding and sustainable career</b></p>
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Beginning self-care practices that can become integrated into your routine can start small, especially when life and work already seem difficult and stressful. Begin with these self-care reflections.

## Self-care does not have to be complex...

<p><b>S</b> Self-Awareness</p>		<p>Personalize your self-care to best fit your needs</p>
<p><b>E</b> Emotional Check-in</p>		<p>Explore the areas of comfort and discomfort within your thoughts and emotions about work</p>
<p><b>L</b> Letting Go</p>		<p>Choose forgiveness over resentment to make space for more present-moment happiness</p>
<p><b>F</b> Focusing on the Good</p>		<p>Give thanks and gratitude for something each day to help you notice more of the good</p>
<p><b>C</b> Commitment</p>		<p>Self-care is not something to “do;” it is an on-going commitment</p>
<p><b>A</b> Acceptance</p>		<p>Focusing on the things you can change while accepting the things you can’t aids in self-care</p>
<p><b>R</b> Relaxation</p>		<p>Consciously make time for relaxation rather than pushing yourself to the point of fatigue</p>
<p><b>E</b> Enjoyment</p>		<p>Take moments to enjoy all your life’s journey</p>

## Self-Compassion

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.

### The Cycle of Self-Compassion



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 yourself has challenges; acknowledging your shared humanity, which is intentionally reminding yourself of our shared imperfections as human beings; and practicing mindfulness to bring greater non-judgmental awareness to your present thoughts and feelings. By practicing this cycle of self-compassion, you will begin to see the benefits in your personal life and your work life.

*Practicing self-compassion is especially important for educators working in schools that are serving large numbers of students coping with trauma.*

### Making time for yourself is one way of matching self-care with self-compassion...

<b>Express Daily Gratitude</b>	Name three things that you are grateful for at the beginning or end of the day.
<b>Take Deep Breaths Regularly</b>	Start a breath mantra to be completed throughout the day; a good example is slowly saying to yourself "breathe in, breathe out" three times a day.
<b>Cherish Your Lunch Break</b>	Whether you want to spend it with your students or by yourself – take time to eat, relax, and re-energize during lunch.
<b>Call Family/Friends</b>	Schedule time to connect with others by phone or in person.
<b>Purposefully Unplug</b>	Be in the moment during an activity that you enjoy by disconnecting from your phone.
<b>Choose Health</b>	Give yourself the permission to make and go to physical and mental health appointments.
<b>Set Emotional Boundaries</b>	Tune into your feelings and begin to acknowledge and name your limits.
<b>Explore New Things</b>	Whether it's hobbies or skills, look to discover or even rediscover something to explore outside of work.

## Self-Honesty Is Self-Care

**Reflect on and write down your thoughts and feelings in response to the following questions, without judging your responses. The goal is to become more aware of your workplace well-being.**

How am I feeling about teaching as a profession: \_\_\_\_\_

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How am I feeling about my school: \_\_\_\_\_

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How am I feeling about my colleagues: \_\_\_\_\_

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How am I feeling about the students I teach: \_\_\_\_\_

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What do I want for myself as I continue in this profession: \_\_\_\_\_

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**“Self-care isn’t selfish. Self-care is an act of self-love. It’s a powerful way to strengthen yourself and connect with your inner core so you’re prepared to make the most of your life when it’s wonderful and when it’s messy.” ~Dr. Ellen Albertson**