

Center on
GREAT TEACHERS & LEADERS

at the American Institutes for Research® ■

Educator Resilience and Trauma-Informed Self-Care

Self-Assessment and Planning Tool

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TEACHING AND LEADING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19 (WEBINAR SERIES)



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Introduction

Teachers across the country are being asked to adopt innovative practices and thoughtful solutions to the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis. In the face of this collective trauma, teachers are standing up to the disruptions and challenges and navigating this new terrain, as they work to take care of themselves and their families, and maintain connections with students and colleagues. This handout includes a self-care self-assessment with key strategies for fostering resilience and a self-care planning tool to assist educators in identifying areas of strength and growth related to self-care and developing self-care plans.

Defining Our Terms

Trauma: The term *trauma* refers to an event, a series of events, or a set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening, that overwhelms a person's ability to cope, and that has adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

Traumatic experiences come in many forms, including acute events, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic; chronic experiences, such as ongoing exposure to violence; and historical traumas that involve the collective and cumulative trauma experienced by a particular group across generations still suffering its effects (e.g., violent colonization and assimilation policies, slavery, segregation, racism, homophobia, and discrimination and oppression).

Secondary traumatic stress: The term secondary traumatic stress (STS) is the emotional distress that results when an individual hears about the traumatic experiences of another individual. Distress may result from hearing survivors' trauma stories, seeing high levels of distress in the midst or aftermath of a traumatic event, needing to retell a survivor's story, and/or seeing photos or images related to the trauma.

Responses to Trauma

People affected by trauma may experience a variety of reactions that may affect all aspects of daily life.

Common Reactions to Trauma	
Emotional	Irritability, sadness, anxiety, depression, guilt, grief, fear, apathy/numbing, agitation, anger
Behavioral	Withdrawal, aggression, increased conflict, crying frequently, excessive worry, difficulty communicating or listening, blaming other people for everything, changes in energy levels, regressed behaviors (children), increased risk-taking (e.g., substance use), decline in school/job performance
Physical	Headaches/stomachaches, heart racing, fatigue, muscle pain, disrupted sleep/appetite, heightened startle response
Cognitive	Confusion, difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, racing thoughts, preoccupation with the event (e.g., intrusive thoughts/memories, trouble thinking clearly)

Key Resilience Factors

Common factors associated with resilience in the face of adversity and trauma include:

- Sense of control
- Sense of meaning and purpose
- Spirituality
- Self-awareness and emotional regulation skills
- Social support
- Healthy coping style
- Humor and optimism
- Cognitive flexibility
- Positive thinking
- Adaptability to change

Self-Care Self-Assessment

Instructions:

Take some time to complete the self-care self-assessment below that includes ideas for how to support your health and well-being in response to COVID-19. Identify how often you incorporate each of these strategies using the following scale:

1 = I never do this.

2 = I rarely do this.

3 = I do this sometimes (e.g., occasionally).

4 = I do this often (e.g., frequently).

Note: Many strategies are available to support self-care and foster resilience in the time of COVID-19. This tool provides ideas about how to practice self-care across many areas of your life. No one strategy works for everyone.

Self-Care Self-Assessment				
Please rate on a scale of 1–4 (1: never–4: frequently) how often you incorporate the following strategies.				
BODY	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Physical Self-Care				
Eat regularly (e.g., breakfast and lunch).	1	2	3	4
Make healthy, well-balanced meals.	1	2	3	4
Maintain a healthy sleep schedule.	1	2	3	4
Engage in relaxing activities before bed.	1	2	3	4
Get regular medical care for prevention (as you are able).	1	2	3	4
Take time off when needed.	1	2	3	4
Drink water.	1	2	3	4
Keep physically active.	1	2	3	4
Take regular breaks from technology, such as phones, e-mail, and social media.	1	2	3	4
Other:	1	2	3	4
Other:	1	2	3	4

Self-Care Self-Assessment Please rate on a scale of 1–4 (1: never–4: frequently) how often you incorporate the following strategies.				
MIND Psychological Self-Care	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Make time for self-reflection.	1	2	3	4
Notice your inner experience—your dreams, thoughts, imagery, and feelings.	1	2	3	4
Recognize your signs of stress and dysregulation.	1	2	3	4
Be mindful of time spent watching the news or scanning social media.	1	2	3	4
Keep a journal to manage worries and/or note your thoughts and experiences.	1	2	3	4
Practice mindfulness techniques that strength self-awareness (e.g., mindful breathing, listening, body scans).	1	2	3	4
Establish cues for practicing self-awareness (e.g., moments, activities, visual reminders). Example: Doing a mindfulness exercise every time I wash my hands; taking deep breaths before a meeting.	1	2	3	4
Be curious.	1	2	3	4
Map your day and note the times you feel most stressed. Embed coping strategies into your daily routine around those times.	1	2	3	4
Recognize what is and is not in your control.	1	2	3	4
Be on the lookout for negative self-talk and try to reframe. Example: "Everything is terrible right now." Reframe: "This is a stressful time, but there are some hopeful and uplifting things we are learning about our community right now" or "Even though this is really hard, I am feeling more connected to loved ones."	1	2	3	4
Be flexible.	1	2	3	4
Do something at which you are a beginner.	1	2	3	4
Set goals that are reasonable and manageable.	1	2	3	4

Self-Care Self-Assessment Please rate on a scale of 1–4 (1: never–4: frequently) how often you incorporate the following strategies.				
Be aware of your default coping patterns and try to employ strategies that involve addressing the problem, reaching out for help, and working to find solutions as opposed to avoiding, shutting down, or numbing out.	1	2	3	4
Spend time outdoors when possible.	1	2	3	4
Notice the things (e.g., people, circumstances, experiences) that set you off (triggers).	1	2	3	4
Plan proactively for how to set up your time in advance to minimize these triggers (e.g., when and for how long you watch the news, how much time you spend on the phone with worried friends or family, how you organize your family’s schedule to minimize chaos and arguments).	1	2	3	4
Set an intention for your day and check in on that intention throughout the day.	1	2	3	4
Be aware of your default coping patterns (e.g., being proactive, asking for help versus being avoidant, having a tendency to ignore or shut down) and try to employ strategies that involve addressing the problem, reaching out for help, and working to find solutions as opposed to avoiding, shutting down, or numbing out.	1	2	3	4
Other:	1	2	3	4
Other:	1	2	3	4
EMOTIONS Emotional Self-Care	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Start your day with an activity that helps you feel regulated (e.g., breathing, meditation, stillness).	1	2	3	4
Find opportunities for movement that are regulating to your nervous system (e.g., walking, dance, yoga).	1	2	3	4
Practice self-compassion (supportive inner dialogue or self-talk).	1	2	3	4
Accept the range of emotions that arise during the course of the day without judgement.	1	2	3	4

Self-Care Self-Assessment Please rate on a scale of 1–4 (1: never–4: frequently) how often you incorporate the following strategies.				
When feeling dysregulated, stop and “change the channel” (do something different that helps you to re-regulate).	1	2	3	4
Limit your COVID-19-related media consumption.	1	2	3	4
Reread favorite books; review favorite movies.	1	2	3	4
Identify and seek out comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, and places.	1	2	3	4
Allow yourself to cry.	1	2	3	4
Find things that make you laugh.	1	2	3	4
Ask for help.	1	2	3	4
Seek professional support when needed.	1	2	3	4
Continue with routines that support your emotional health and can be done virtually (e.g., therapy, Alcoholics Anonymous meetings).	1	2	3	4
Feel proud of yourself.	1	2	3	4
Build in time to do things that you enjoy and can get lost in that generate positive emotions (e.g., puzzles, knitting, baking, playing an instrument, drawing, coloring, listening to music, gardening).	1	2	3	4
Find things that make you laugh.	1	2	3	4
Incorporate grounding techniques when overwhelmed (e.g., deep breathing, body scans, muscle relaxation, rhythmic activities, warm shower, scents such as lavender).	1	2	3	4
Other:	1	2	3	4
Other:	1	2	3	4
RELATIONSHIPS Relational Self-Care	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Stay in contact with important people in your life.	1	2	3	4
Schedule regular calls with friends and family.	1	2	3	4
Use technology to talk "face to face."	1	2	3	4
Establish times for virtual group hangouts.	1	2	3	4

Self-Care Self-Assessment Please rate on a scale of 1–4 (1: never–4: frequently) how often you incorporate the following strategies.				
Organize a "watch party" text chain or Zoom to group-watch a favorite TV show.	1	2	3	4
Find an app game (e.g., Words With Friends) that you can play with others.	1	2	3	4
Connect to social media sites as they are useful for helping you feel connected.	1	2	3	4
Find opportunities to rekindle relationships that you may have made less time for in the past.	1	2	3	4
Consider other communities you might want to join at this time related to hobbies, interests, or online learning events.	1	2	3	4
Share your feelings, both positive and negative, with others.	1	2	3	4
Other:	1	2	3	4
Other:	1	2	3	4
SPIRIT Spiritual Self-Care	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Make time for spiritual practice (e.g., prayer, meditation, scripture reading).	1	2	3	4
Spend time in nature.	1	2	3	4
Be aware of nontangible (nonmaterial) aspects of life.	1	2	3	4
Identify what is meaningful to you and notice its place in your life.	1	2	3	4
Participate in a virtual spiritual gathering, community, or group.	1	2	3	4
Have awe-full experiences.	1	2	3	4
Find creative, playful, and joyful ways to express yourself (singing, playing musical instruments, art, dance).	1	2	3	4
Express gratitude.	1	2	3	4
Celebrate milestones with rituals that are meaningful to you.	1	2	3	4
Remember and memorialize loved ones who have died.	1	2	3	4
Be open to inspiration.	1	2	3	4

Self-Care Self-Assessment Please rate on a scale of 1–4 (1: never–4: frequently) how often you incorporate the following strategies.				
Cherish your optimism and hope.	1	2	3	4
Contribute to or participate in causes you believe in.	1	2	3	4
Find ways to help others.	1	2	3	4
Read inspirational literature and/or listen to inspirational talks and music.	1	2	3	4
Practice gratitude (e.g., keep a gratitude journal or write a letter of gratitude to someone).	1	2	3	4
Seek out media that is positive and hopeful.	1	2	3	4
Participate in virtual cultural events (e.g., concerts, talks).	1	2	3	4
Stay connected to your values and sense of purpose during this time.	1	2	3	4
Look for beauty in the day-to-day.	1	2	3	4
Other:	1	2	3	4
Other:	1	2	3	4
WORK	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Workplace/Professional Self-Care				
Take time to eat lunch.	1	2	3	4
Take time to chat with coworkers.	1	2	3	4
Create a work space that includes things that inspire you (e.g., images, quotes).	1	2	3	4
Build in brief periods for relaxation and regulation throughout your day.	1	2	3	4
Pace yourself between stressful activities, and do a fun thing after a hard task.	1	2	3	4
Pursue regular learning and professional development.	1	2	3	4
Ask for what you need to be able to do your work successfully (e.g., resources, guidance, technical support, emotional support).	1	2	3	4
Get support from colleagues.	1	2	3	4
Institute virtual team gatherings with peers that are specifically designed to provide support.	1	2	3	4
Set reasonable expectations of yourself and others.	1	2	3	4

Self-Care Self-Assessment Please rate on a scale of 1–4 (1: never–4: frequently) how often you incorporate the following strategies.				
Take a "self-compassion" break: (1) remind yourself that this is a difficult situation; (2) remind yourself that you are not alone; and (3) offer yourself some compassionate words ("May I be kind to myself today.").	1	2	3	4
Remind yourself of your strengths as you take on new things.	1	2	3	4
Create some separation between work and home (e.g., a work space, breaks, transition routines).	1	2	3	4

Self-Care Self-Assessment adapted from Saakvitne, Pearlman, and staff of TSI/CAAP (1996) & Lisa D. Butler, Ph.D., at the University at Buffalo School of Social Work. Adapted by the American Institutes for Research.

Follow-Up Questions to Consider:

1. What was the process of filling out the checklist like for you?

2. Were you surprised by any of your responses? If so, which ones?

3. In what areas are you strongest? Where is there room for growth?

Self-Care Plan

Use this template to create your own self-care plan. Check back regularly to see how things are going, and assess whether you need to make any adjustments to your plan. You may consider sharing some goals with friends, family, or colleagues if it is useful to have their support and encouragement.

Based on your responses to the self-care self-assessment, list one to two things in each area that you already do frequently and one to two things that you would like to try out or do more of to take care of yourself. Then, choose three to five things from your list that you can make a commitment to doing in the next month.

Area	Already Do	Would Like to Do
BODY 		
MIND 		
EMOTIONS 		
RELATIONSHIPS 		
SPIRIT 		
WORK 		

Committed to Do in the Next Month:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Resources

- [Greater Good Science Center Guide to Well-Being During Coronavirus](#). Includes resources and articles for individuals, parents, educators, and other professionals facing COVID-19.
- [Greater Good in Education Program](#). Produced by the University of California, Berkley's Greater Good Science Center, offers education professionals practical insights from areas such as social and emotional learning, mindfulness, and related topics for their personal and professional lives. Resources include [Stress Management for Educators](#) and [Trauma and Resilience for Adults](#).
- [COVID-19 Well-Being Toolkit and Resources](#). Developed by the [Center for Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin-Madison](#). Includes resources, tips, and guided mediations for supporting well-being for educators, students, and parents.
- [COVID-19 Resources: Taking Care of Yourself in Difficult Times](#). Includes guidelines and strategies for self-care from the American Federation of Teachers.
- [COVID-19 Resources: Helpful Information and Tips for Dealing with COVID-19](#). Offers a comprehensive list of resources from the American Federation of Teachers for navigating the emotional effects of COVID-19, including articles, videos, blogs, and podcasts for dealing with the stress related to coronavirus. Includes resources on self-care, such as [Taking Care of Yourself in Difficult Times](#).
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Resources for School Communities](#). Resources and free webinars from the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence for supporting leaders, educators, students, and families.
- [CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019: Stress and Coping](#). Provides explanations and resources to help individuals (parents, caregivers, first responders and other professionals, people with existing mental health challenges) anticipate, prepare for, and manage fear, anxiety, and extraordinary stress. See also [CDC Emergency Preparedness and Response: Taking Care of Your Emotional Health](#).
- [Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health During an Infectious Disease Outbreak](#). *(Spanish language version also available)*. Describes feelings and thoughts that individuals may have during and after social distancing, quarantine, and isolation. This SAMHSA tip sheet suggests ways to care for one's own behavioral health in these circumstances and provides resources for more help.
- [Coping with Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks](#). *(Spanish language version)*. Provides tips for coping with stress during an infectious disease outbreak. This SAMHSA fact sheet describes common signs of stress and how to recognize when to get help.

- [CASEL CARES: SEL Resource During COVID-19](#). Includes webinars and tips for navigating adult and student social and emotional needs in response to COVID-19.
- [Taking Care of Yourself](#). From the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, this checklist offers best practices that individuals can use to maintain awareness, find balance, and connect after a difficult event.
- [National Institute of Mental Health 5 Things You Should Know About Stress](#). Includes information about managing stress, along with resources and hotlines to call if additional support is needed.
- [Mindful.org](#). Includes a variety of guided meditations and mindfulness practices, such as resources and strategies for managing stress related to COVID-19.
- [Pocket Mindfulness. 6 Mindfulness Exercises You Can Try Today](#). This blog presents six simple meditation exercises that can help cultivate mental spaciousness and achieve a positive mind-body balance.
- [Stressing Out? S.T.O.P.](#) This short practice by Elisha Goldstein discusses how creating space in the day to come down from a worried mind can mitigate the negative effects of our stress response.
- [8 Mindfulness Exercises for Dealing with COVID-19](#). These simple exercises can help mitigate and manage our stress response during this time.
- [Teachers, If You're Not OK Right Now, You're Not Alone](#). A first-person account, published by *Education Week*, of an educator adapting to life and work during the coronavirus epidemic.
- Free mindfulness apps:
 - [Stop, Breathe, and Think](#) is a guided meditation app that allows you to choose your own meditation experience and suggests useful meditations based on how you are feeling on that particular day.
 - [Calm](#) includes an array of meditative visuals and soundscapes with quick meditative moments, full guided meditations, and the ability to track your progress.
 - [Smiling Mind](#) provides specific meditation programs for different age groups, ranging from age 7 to adult, including short as well as extended mindfulness exercises.
 - [Insight Timer](#) provides a number of guided meditations and a simple meditation timer you can use anywhere.
 - [Omvana](#) is library of meditation and mindfulness talks by the top professionals in the field.

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