

Joseph Campbell said, "The job of an educator is to teach students to see vitality in themselves." Educators have been called to a vocation to help our young people recognize their strengths, liveliness, their meaning and purpose, and what drives them. All of this is no small task. This is a mission that requires a person's whole self, their heart, soul, and energy. Over time and through experience, this same amazing vocation can be a source of great stress, challenge, and even burnout. Cultivating resilience as an educator is crucial to actualizing a thriving career and impacting the lives of many. Let's explore some key elements to building your resilience as an educator.

Set Personal Intentions & Realistic Expectation: Educators are some of the most passionate and determined people who support youth. Along with so much passion and ability to see potential in youth can come deep feelings of compassion, defined as feeling driven to take action to alleviate the struggles or suffering of others. For teachers and educators, compassion can be seen in many ways such as helping a student improve academic skills, increase feelings of social acceptance, and even to experience less stress outside of school. While all of these things are wonderful hopes and desires, there are limitations to what an educator has control over or can actually change. When adults believe it is their duty to remove struggle, stress, or suffering for a young person, they are increasing their risk of feeling burnt out or experiencing compassion fatigue.

Rather than setting your intentions or expectations based on the change of others or situations which are out of your control, consider setting personal intentions. These could be intentions for how you desire to show up in relationship with students or the type of environment you strive to create in the classroom. For example: "Today my intention is to notice something unique about 5 students and communicate genuine appreciation to them".

Let Go of the "Shoulds": In today's world of education, there is significant emphasis on evidence based/best practices and measuring outcomes and results. While both of these are important to cultivating academic success, they have a tendency to create a long list of "shoulds" related to many other aspects, for example: "I should be doing it like this...If I was being successful my students should all....etc" When we focus on the *shoulds*, *coulds*, or *woulds*, we can become rigid in our beliefs that there is only one way to achieve something or there is only one way to define success. This can be true for ourselves and our students. Further, with this focus we miss out on the beautiful process of learning and growing. We miss opportunities for flexible and creative solutions and struggle to engage in growth mindset.

When you find yourself stuck in "shoulds", allow yourself to let it go. You can use curiosity, compassion or even humor to acknowledge your human desire for control and then step into creativity, openness, and the present moment.



Focus on Care of Self...Not Self-Care: Helpers across all fields are frequently told to do "self-care" and for many of us, this is common sense. Yet we still put it off. Many people put off "self-care" because we associate it as synonymous with treating our selves to something special such as vacations, spa days, long relaxing baths and so on. Most of these things cost money and require us to have time off from work or personal life responsibilities, making it unrealistic to engage in "self-care" regularly. The truth is, while these things certainly feel good and can positively impact our state of being, these are not the core intention of "self-care", rather the true intention and need is for helpers to practice "care of self".

Care of self is something we are called to do every day. This involves getting quality sleep, eating nutritious meals, enjoying movement or exercise, connecting with others, paying our bills, cleaning our living spaces, prayer/meditation, showering daily, and many other daily activities that meet our needs as human beings. To begin, practicing care of self, we often have to set healthy boundaries in various areas of our life including work, family, friends, community, and so forth. There are only 24 hours in each day and it is important that we structure daily schedules to ensure our needs are being met. Having routines which consistently meet our needs has a much greater impact on our mental wellbeing because we develop an internal felt sense of safety and security. When this happens, our brain is able to shift from a mentality of scarcity(survival) to a mentality of abundance(thriving), helping to prevent and reduce feelings of stress, overwhelm, and burnout.

Nurture Authentic Connections: Every day, many American workers spend more waking hours at work or with co-workers than they do at home or with family and friends. For this reason, it is imperative we feel a sense of connection and belonging at our workplaces and within our professional relationships. While some may say "you aren't at work to make friends", the truth is connection is a basic human need for survival. No one can survive all on their own and when a person feels lonely or disconnected, they often experience increased feelings of anxiety, depression, overwhelm, irritability, apathy and much more. Humans need connection and relationships in which they feel safe to be their true authentic self, to share their emotions, thoughts, and experiences, and to receive support and validation.

In today's culture, where individualism, competition, and criticism can feel intense, it is key for each of us to develop a circle of support. When building your circle, it is important to feel safe being your truest self, being accepted as you are with all of your strengths and shortcomings. Authentic relationships offer us a space to feel safe being vulnerable, making mistakes, not knowing the answer, sharing our fears, and genuinely celebrating success. These relationships offer an amazing amount of encouragement and empowerment simply by offering genuine acceptance. These relationships give us the confidence to be our authentic selves across other areas of life as well, and when we engage with students or young people as our authentic self, we are offering them a role-model and the courage to do the same.

Make a Plan: Don't wait until you are experiencing burnout or compassion fatigue to begin taking care of yourself. Be intentional by reflecting on your needs, what helps you thrive, and create a plan. Try using our [Compassion Resilience Plan](#) to get you started!

