

PRINCIPAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SERIES | NOVEMBER 2020



SUPPORTING EDUCATORS IN THE AGE OF COVID-19: LEADERSHIP APPROACHES FOR THRIVING EDUCATORS AND SCHOOLS

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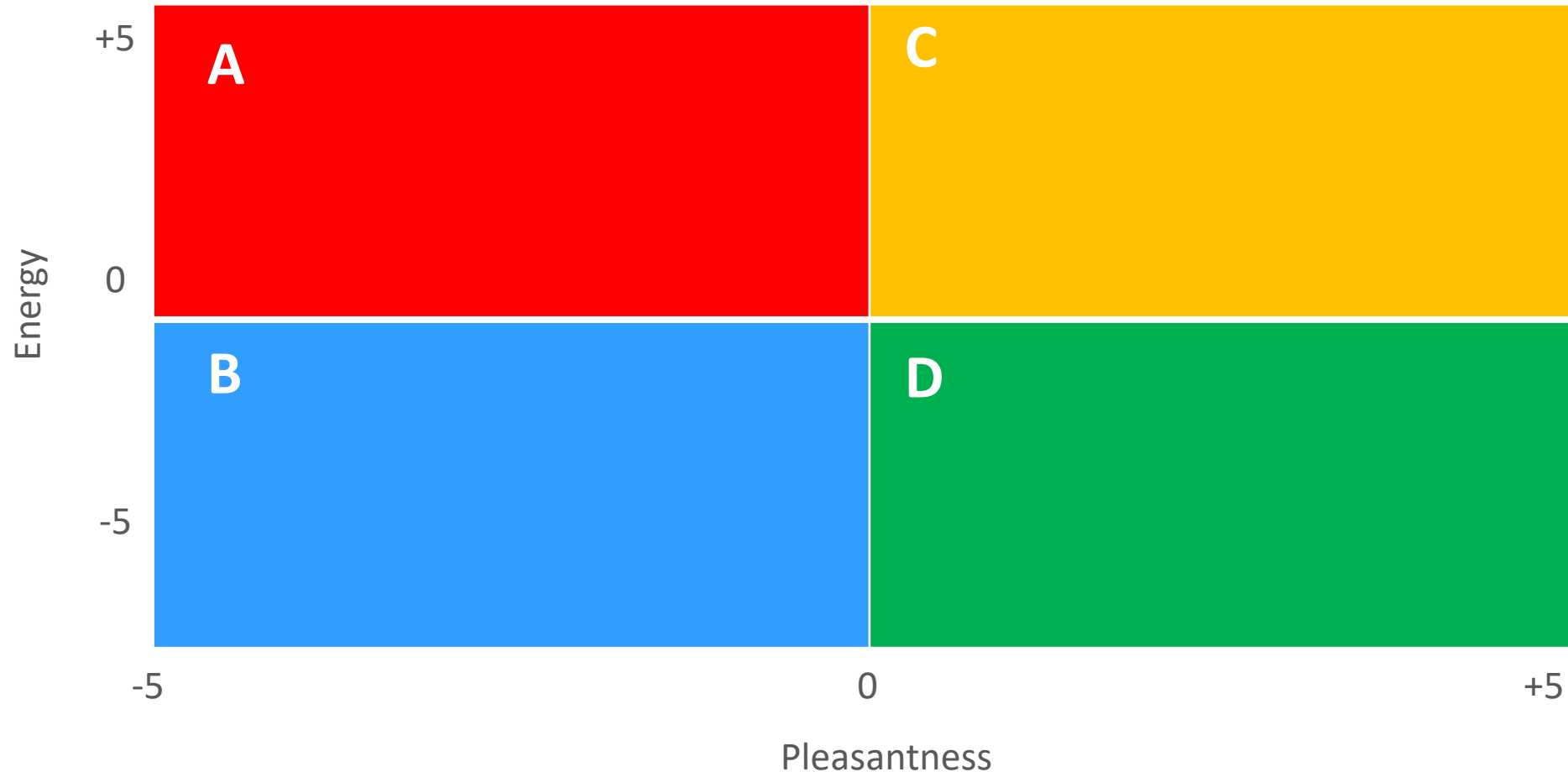


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How are you feeling today?

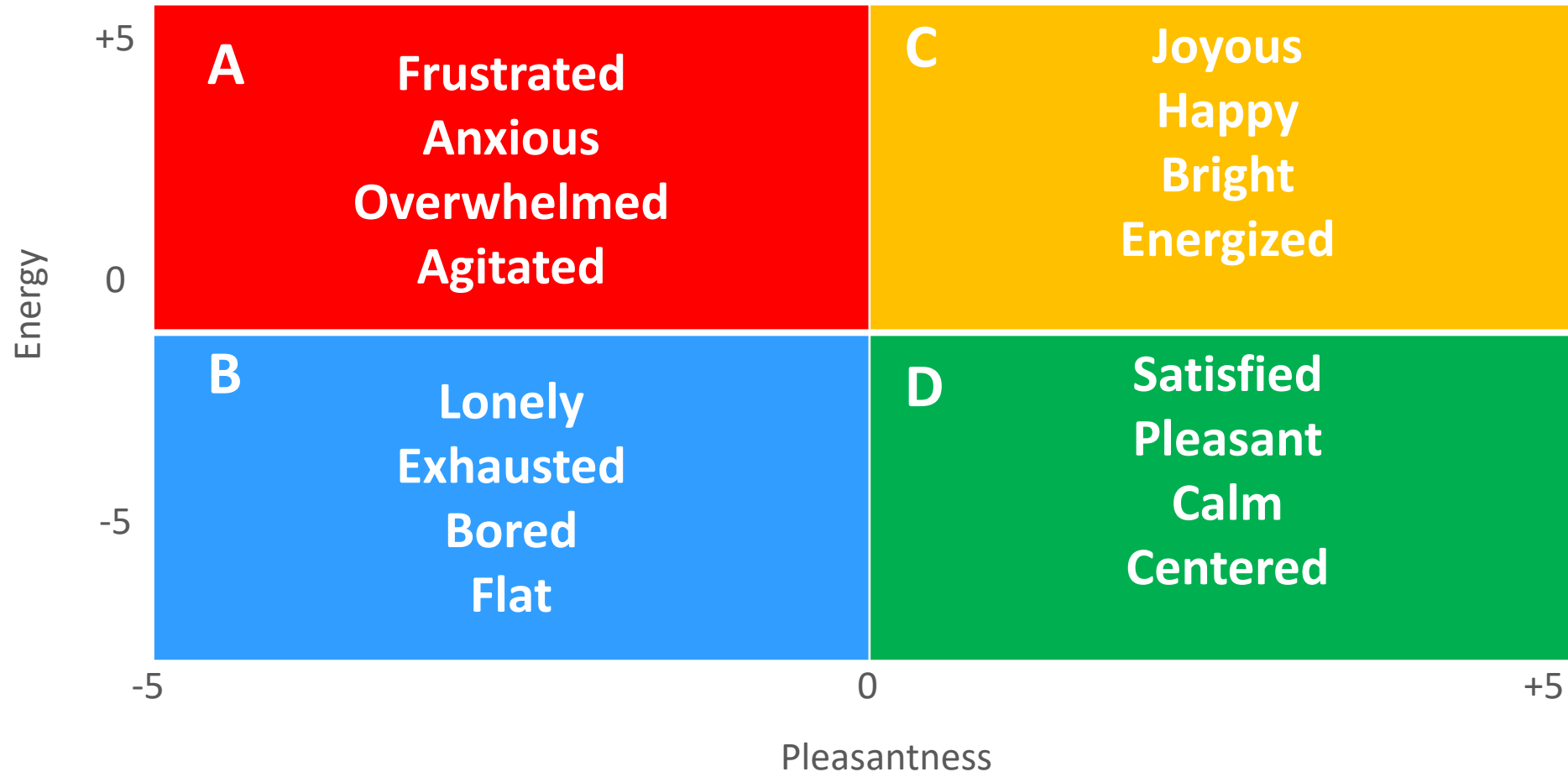
Thinking metaphorically, choose which image best represents change during COVID-19. You can only choose one answer and be prepared to volunteer an explanation!



Marc Brackett, 2020
www.ycei.org/

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Changes to teaching and learning

Teaching and learning has dramatically changed in 2020, and in response to the pandemic.

- **85 percent of schools closed worldwide** (World Bank, 2020).
- **Online learning is now the primary instructional modality** (AIR, 2020).
- **Learning time is primarily online** (AIR, 2020).
- **Students with disadvantages experience heightened barriers to learning** (World Bank, 2020; AIR, 2020).



We are still determining which new features of schooling might be indelible, and which features may be dropped when we are able to convene in-person classes again.

Changes to teaching and learning

Principals and teachers have made remarkable shifts in their work, in service of students and families. Still, changes generate stress and anxiety. We see some evidence of teacher concerns in national data:

- **Teachers are more stress**, during to COVID-19 (CASEL, 2020).
- **Teachers' sense of well-being has decreased** (Bintlinff, Holtzman, Barron-Borden, Ko, Thong & Ardell, 2020).
- **Teachers report that they were underprepared to deliver online learning** (Hamilton, Kaufman & Diliberti, 2020).
- **More teachers are considering leaving the profession: 28 percent** o teachers said that they were more likely to retire, which is 8 percent higher than the national average (NEA, 2020).



How can leaders support teachers? Understanding stress

Each of us experiences stress in different ways, and we each have different capacities for regulating stress.

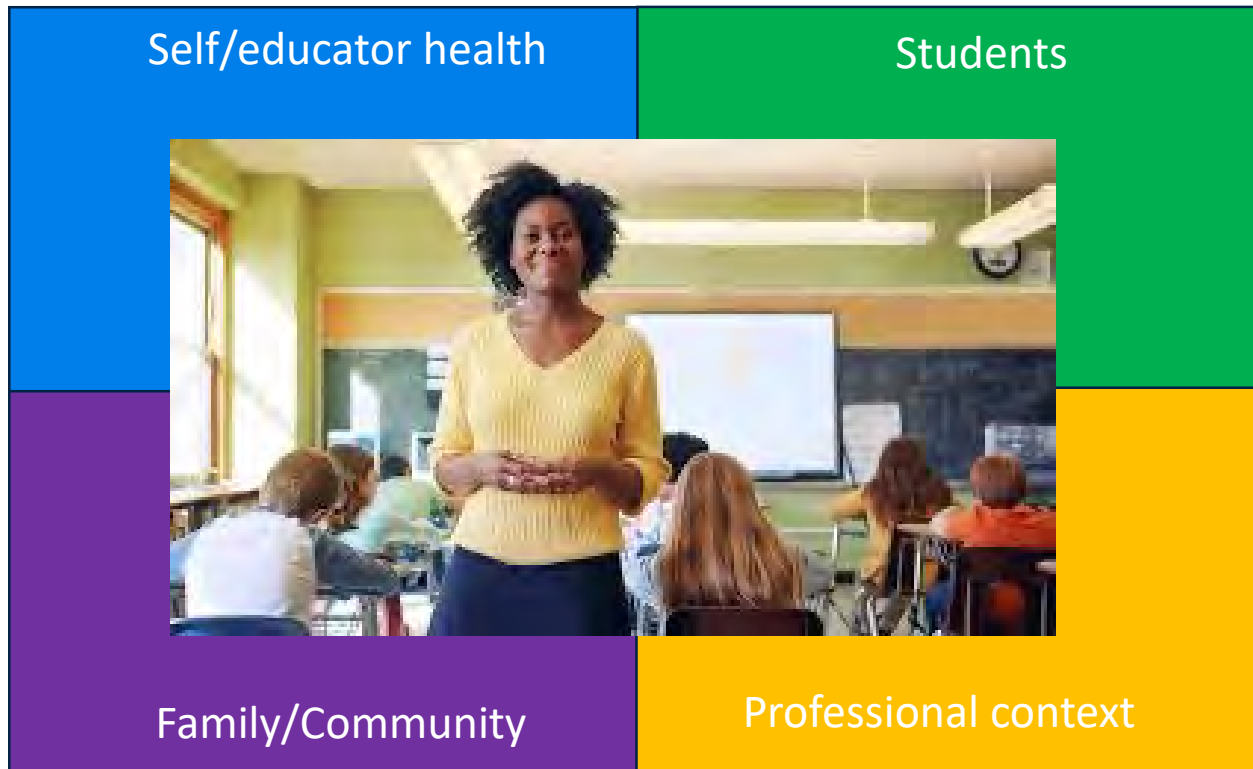
Origins of stress



Guarino, 2020; National Institute for Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine, 2019

How can leaders support teachers? Understanding stress

As principals, we should consider the “whole teacher” when considering stress sources and responses.



Teachers are experiencing more distress now. NEA (2020) noted the following stressors during COVID-19 closures:

- Concern for kids and their families;
- Feeling socially isolated from colleagues;
- Anxiety about student learning and service;
- Change in professional mission;
- Changing work routines;
- Rapidly learning and applying new skills;
- Uncertainty about the future.

How can leaders support teachers? Understanding stress

Each of us experiences stress in different ways, and we each have different capacities for regulating stress.



Types of stress

- **Eustress:** Positive stress or pressure to perform well.
- **Acute distress :** Event or experience that is short-lived.
- **Chronic distress:** Events or experiences that occur repeatedly over long periods of time.
- **Historical distress:** The cumulative impact of group trauma across long periods of time.

Guarino, 2020; National Institute for Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine, 2019

How can leaders support teachers? Understanding stress

Each of us experiences stress in different ways, and we each have different capacities for identifying and regulating stress.



Experiencing distress

- **Primary traumatic stress:** Firsthand stress
- **Secondary traumatic stress:** Hearing about and empathizing with someone who has experienced stress firsthand

Guarino, 2020

How can leaders support teachers? Understanding stress

If stress isn't regulated well, trauma can result and appear in certain behaviors.

Hyperarousal

- Irritability
- Anger
- Overreacting to small issues
- Panic buying
- Difficulty sleeping
- Obsessive behaviors
- Binging
- Blaming others
- Regressive behaviors (acting childish)
- Heightened startle response
- Racing thoughts

Hypoarousal

- Sleeping a lot
- Ruminating
- Procrastinating
- Not exercising
- Confusion
- Becoming “flat” emotionally
- Physically withdrawing from others
- Forgetfulness
- Spacing out or trouble concentrating
- Debilitating physical conditions (e.g., headaches)



National Institute for Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine, 2019

How can leaders support teachers? Supporting self-awareness

AIR has developed a diagnostic to help educators think about their own stress levels.

The Educator Context and Stress Spectrum was designed to support teachers and principals in gaining a greater awareness of how their current personal and professional context affects their levels of stress in the time of COVID-19. Although contexts may change from day to day, using this tool carefully can lead to greater appreciation for the challenges at hand and, ideally, can lead to beneficial self-care strategies.

To complete the exercise, print out the PDF, read across the first row. Place a circle around the statement that most aligns with your experience. Circle the one that is most relevant.

No printer? Explore the interactive version [online](#).



Self/Educator Health



Educator is in a low-risk category for COVID-19; is experienced in distance learning; has strong, reliable support for mental well-being.



Educator is in a low-risk category for COVID-19; has limited experience in distance learning; has support for mental well-being.



Educator at some risk for contracting COVID-19; has little or no experience in distance learning; has limited support for mental well-being.



Educator in a high-risk category for COVID-19; has no experience in distance learning; in need of strong, reliable support for mental well-being.

Students' Well-Being



Students engage in digital learning; have access to materials; families are able to support distance learning; students' basic needs are met (e.g., food, shelter, care).



Students engage in digital learning; have access to materials; most families are able to support distance learning; most have basic needs met.



Students are challenged by distance learning and/or have limited access to technology. Many students' home environments are not able to support student need for a variety of reasons (e.g., learning disability, English language learner, loved one is sick); less than half of students have their basic needs met; some may experience threats to health and safety.



Students have very limited access to technology, and their context adds to the challenge; most students' home environments are not able to support student need for a variety of reasons (e.g., learning disability, English language learner, loved one is sick); only a few students have their basic needs met; there are considerable threats to health and safety.

Family/Community Well-Being



Loved ones are safe, supportive, and able to work from home; no distractions from children; lives outside of a hotspot; low population density; community supports for food, shelter, and public safety; no historical community trauma.



Loved ones are at risk for contracting COVID-19; minimal distractions from children; lives near a hotspot; low population density; some community supports for food, shelter, and public safety; minimal historical community trauma.



Loved ones have been temporarily laid off and/or are not feeling well; juggling work and family life is a significant challenge; lives in a hotspot with mid-high population density; limited community supports for food, shelter, and public safety; historical community trauma.



Loved ones have lost jobs, are sick, or may have passed away; juggling work and family life is impossible to manage; lives in a hotspot with high population density; has very minimal community supports for food, shelter, and public safety; significant historical community trauma.

Professional Context



Colleagues: Colleagues are safe, supportive, and engaged with each other in addressing each other's and their students' needs.

District Support: Communication and plans from the district leadership are frequent, consistent, and clear. Leadership is leveraging partnerships with health and workforce organizations to provide additional support for teachers and students.

School Support: Leadership team is providing time, guidance, and solutions to problems, including the removal of roadblocks.

School Community: Strong, supportive, and engaged community; stable budgets; no historical community trauma.



Colleagues: Colleagues are safe, supportive, and engaged, but teaching in this new format is a challenge, and colleagues have loved ones who are at risk of contracting COVID-19.

District Support: Communication and plans from the district leadership are infrequent but consistent and clear. Leadership is leveraging partnerships to provide some support for teachers and students.

School Support: Leadership team occasionally supports teachers with time, guidance, and solutions to problems, including the removal of roadblocks.

School Community: Supportive, engaged community; stable budgets; minimal historical community trauma.



Colleagues: Colleagues not feeling safe or supported and need resources; some are concerned that they or their loved ones have contracted COVID-19.

District Support: Communication and plans from the district leadership are infrequent and inconsistent. Leadership is leveraging partnerships, but with minimal impact on supports for teachers and students.

School Support: Leadership team inconsistently supports teachers with time, guidance, and solutions to problems. They have not consistently removed roadblocks.

School Community: Supportive but disengaged community; unstable budgets; historical community trauma.



Colleagues: Colleagues not feeling safe or supported and need resources; some are sick or have passed away.

District Support: Communication and plans from the district leadership are infrequent and contradictory. Leadership is not leveraging partnerships to provide additional support for teachers and students.

School Support: School leadership team and principal are not providing time and guidance, removing roadblocks, and offering solutions to problems.

School Community: Unsupportive and disengaged community; unstable budgets; significant historical community trauma.

When you've finished filling out the chart, ask yourself, where do I fall on each item? How does this make me feel? What do these results mean for me? Next, explore the [Self-Care Self-Assessment](#) to find strategies to support your resilience and well-being.

https://gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/Stress_Spectrum.pdf

How can leaders support teachers? Engaging with teachers

As principals, we are in a good position to support individual teachers. Most of us aren't mental health professionals, though, so we need to know the parameters of our support.

We can be an “emotion scientist”

1. Ask teachers about stressors.
2. Accept emotional responses as information.
3. Practice emotional intelligence.
4. Pay close attention to teacher behaviors.
5. Consider numbers/types of stressors experienced.
6. Maintain contact with teachers.
7. Act as a sounding board for teacher stress.
8. Legitimize teachers' feelings of stress.
9. See emotional states as changing.
10. Learn more about how to support mental health.
11. Know about district policies, resources, benefits.
12. Tell teachers about how to access resources.
13. Connect teachers with mental health professionals.

We can avoid being an “emotion judge”

1. Asks about stress when behavior is evident.
2. Considers emotions to be permanent
3. Is critical of emotional statements or outbursts.
4. Views emotions as good or bad.
5. Withdraws or avoids emotional discussions.

Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, 2020; CASEL, 2020; AIR, 2020



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Resources for principals: CASEL curates educator resources (www.casel.org)

[“10 Mental Health Tips for Teachers During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” EverFi: External link](#) advice for work-life balance and remote teaching.

[“15 Ways to Reduce Teacher Stress,” Scholastic: External link](#) Tips to help teachers love what they do and enjoy their lives outside the classroom.

[ASCD Express, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development \(ASCD\): External link](#) newsletter with practical and actionable strategies to help teachers and school leaders with self-care and more.

[CARE \(Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education\), Create for Education and the Garrison Institute: External link](#) programs to help teachers, principals and other educators develop healthy social and emotional behavior.

[Care for the Caregiver: Guidelines for Administrators and Crisis Teams, National Association of School Psychologists: External link](#) risks and stressors, warning signs and strategies for self-care for school staff.

[“COVID-19 Employee Mental Health Support Audit and Resource Guide,” EAB \(PDF, 337 KB\): External link](#) guide for evaluating a school’s capability to support the mental health of teachers and staff.

[“Don’t Lose Your Head,” NEA Today: External link](#) tips to help teachers keep burnout at bay and maintain grace under pressure inside and outside the classroom.

[Educating Through Crisis, National Education Association: External link](#) guide for physical and mental wellness with webinars, financial information and tips to set up a home gym.

[The Educator’s Room: External link](#) articles and advice dedicated to improving education and using the wisdom and experience of classroom teachers, with information on the annual [Teacher Self-Care Conference. External link](#)

[“Educators: You Have Permission to Take Care of Yourselves, Right Now,” Mindful Schools: External link](#) tips for teachers on how to show themselves compassion and self-care with guided practices to relieve stress.

Resources for principals: CASEL curates educator resources (www.casel.org)

[“How to Teach and Still Have a Life This School Year,” Scholastic: External link](#) tips, strategies and encouragement for teachers to set boundaries and stay motivated.

[Life and Well-being, We Are Teachers: External link](#) curated topics page of videos, articles and tools focused on reinvigorating and inspiring teachers to live more healthfully.

[My Well-being, Greater Good in Education: External link](#) strategies and practices for the adults who work with students to help encourage positive school cultures.

[Personal Assessment and Reflection Tool, Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\) \(PDF, 362 KB\): External link](#) self-evaluation tool for school leaders, staff and other adults to assess personal strengths in social and emotional learning.

[“Prioritizing Well-being: Mental Health Strategies for Teachers and Students,” EverFi: External link](#) webinar exploring activities, strategies, tips and tricks to help with mental well-being.

[Resilient Educator: External link](#) articles for educators with content ranging from self-care to teaching tips and professional development.

[“Self-Care for Educators Working From Home,” California Teachers Association \(PDF, 1.5 MB\): External link](#) activities and strategies for educators to stay connected and healthy while working remotely.

[Self-Care Resources, Mindful Teachers: External link](#) tips, reflections, mindfulness practices and more to help with common challenges educators face.

[Share My Lesson, American Federation of Teachers: External link](#) articles, lesson plan guides and other content to provide teachers high-quality material for their students.

Resources for principals: CASEL curates educator resources (www.casel.org)

[SMART \(Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques\) in Education, PassageWorks: External link](#) program with virtual workshops delivered over eight weeks to reduce stress and improve mental well-being.

[Teacher Well-being, The Guardian Network: External link](#) curated stories focused on supporting educators.

[Teacher Wellness, Edutopia: External link](#) articles, videos and other helpful content about self-care.

[For Educators, Understood.org: External link](#) articles, tools and resources to help educators navigate different situations.

[“What About You? Educator Resilience and Trauma-Informed Self-Care,” Center on Great Teachers and Leaders: External link](#) video webinar on how educators can take care of themselves and their families while maintaining connections to students and colleagues during a crisis.

[“Why Teacher Self-Care Matters and How to Practice Self-Care in Your School,” Waterford.org: External link](#) activities and tips for teachers to use inside and outside the classroom.

[“World Mental Health Day: 5 Tips for Teacher Well-being,” Teach Starter: External link](#) advice on how to de-stress, maintain physical health and strive for better work-life balance.