

# Self Care Activities for Teachers

The following activities can be done on your own or as a group self-care activity with your teachers.

## Doing what makes you happy

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### 1. Activity: Nourishing and Depleting

When we start to feel stressed we start to neglect the nourishing activities which usually help us feel better and tend to focus on things we absolutely have to do. This further depletes and exhausts us and as we feel worse we do even less of what nourishes us.

The nourishing and depleting activity from Professor Mark Williams and Denny Penman in the book Peace in a frantic world, is designed to help us gain some insight into our daily habits and find new ways to be more balanced with the things that nourish and deplete our energy.

#### Reflection and Journal Activity:

- Take a moment to close your eyes and mentally run through the different activities that you do in a typical day.
- Write them down in order from when you start a typical day until you finish it. Breaking down the activities further if you find yourself doing a lot of the same things during the day at work (e.g. meetings, teaching, lesson planning, writing, filing, tidying up, lunch etc). Include activities you do at home and in the evening and on the weekends.
- When you have the list in front of you ask yourself these questions about what you have written:
  1. Which activities nourish you, lift your mood, make you feel calm, centred present, energised? Write an (N) next to these activities in your list.
  2. Which activities deplete you, drain your energy, make you feel tense or anxious, deplete your sense of being alive and present? Write a (D) next to these activities in your list.
  3. Which activities are neutral? Meaning they don't nourish or drain you. Write a small (n) next to these activities in your list.
  4. If an activity is both (N) and (D) put down your initial reaction or put both N/D if that is the case.
  5. Add up each N, D and N/D or n.
    - The aim of this exercise is to give you an idea of the balance in your life. How many N, D and n's did you have? Do you think that you have a good balance? It does not have to be perfect, but it is an interesting and enlightening way to see how we go about our activities. What could you change to increase the nourishing activities and reduce the draining ones you do in a day?
  6. Increase the time and gentle effort you devote to nourishing activities and decrease the depleting ones.
  7. Try to approach the depleting activities in a different way, practicing being fully present with them instead of judging them or wishing them away. Using a mindful mindset to support you as you do these activities.

## 2. Using Your Strengths At Work

Once you have identified what activities nourish you and what tasks/roles make you happy at work you can look at your strengths. The VIA Strengths is an assessment tool developed in Positive Psychology to help you understand and leverage your best qualities.

Strengths are your unique characteristics, natural positive traits that when used help you be authentic, feel energised and perform at your best. Your strengths are a major contributing factor to your well being because using strengths is enjoyable and they can help you feel positive and engaged in your work and life. They are different to skills and talents in that they reflect who we are at our core.

### VIA Strengths Activity:

- Take your time to do the free VIA Strengths Survey. Once you have completed it you can get a downloadable PDF of your results. [www.viacharacter.org](http://www.viacharacter.org)
  - Choose one of your top 5 VIA Strengths that is core to who you are, is easy for you to use, and gives you energy.
  - In your journal write down 5 new ways to use that strength at work this week.
  - The following week you may like to choose another one of your top 5 strengths.
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## 3. Noticing Nature

 [https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/noticing\\_nature](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/noticing_nature)

Be mindful of the natural elements and objects on a daily basis (eg. trees, leaves, birds, wind, clouds, sunshine, moving water, animals). Notice how these things make you feel and what emotions they evoke. Take a moment to truly allow yourself to experience the nature around you.

When you encounter an element, natural object or scenery that evokes a strong emotion in you or moves you in some way; photograph it. If you can you may like to upload it, share it and write down a brief description on what prompted you to take it and how this natural scene made you feel.

Remember the key experience is how nature made you feel, not how creative or descriptive you are!

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## 4. Capitalising on Positive Events

 [https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/capitalizing\\_on\\_positive\\_events](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/capitalizing_on_positive_events)

- Ask a friend, family member or colleague to tell you about a positive experience that happened to them recently. It doesn't matter how important it was as long as it was positive and they feel comfortable telling you.
- As they begin to share try to act in a active-constructive way meaning
  - Make good eye contact, show you're engaged and listening
  - Express positive emotion smiling
  - Make enthusiastic comments like "that's awesome", "you must be so excited" "your hard work is definitely paying off"
  - Ask constructive questions to find out more details about the positive aspects of the event. For example if the person you asked achieved something at work you could ask for more details on what they're specifically proud of.
  - Comment on the positive implications and benefits of the event.
- When some people hear about this exercise they worry they will sound too scripted or phony but when they do it they notice it feels very natural and easy to do.

## 1. Read: What is Gratitude and Why Is It So Important?

<https://positivepsychology.com/gratitude-appreciation/>

## 2. Read: Smiling Mind Science of Gratitude

<https://blog.smilingmind.com.au/the-science-behind-gratitude>

## 3. Activity: Gratitude Letter

Visit the Smiling Mind App (Explore > Adult Programs > Relationships > Relationship With Friends > Gratitude Letter/Visit.)

## 4. Activity: Gratitude Wall

Make a gratitude wall for your staffroom at school. Whenever someone at work does or says something you are grateful for, write this on a piece of paper and pop it in their gratitude jar (e.g. 'Thank you for your help with planning', 'Thank you for telling a joke that made me laugh', 'Thank you for supporting me'). This is a great way to foster connection and care by simply noticing and acknowledging all the things people at your work do for you.

## 5. Activity: Workplace Gratitude Hot Seat.

Gratitude works best when it is shared! At the beginning of a staff meeting or PD, ask one colleague at a time to take the hot seat and each staff member has to share one thing they are grateful about that person and it doesn't only have to be related to their work performance. They get to then choose the next person to sit in the

## 6. Meditation: 'Gratitude and Joy' Meditation in Thrive Inside Program

Visit the Smiling Mind App (Explore > Adult Programs > Thrive Inside > Gratitude and Joy).

# Cultivating Compassion and Self-Compassion



 <https://blog.smilingmind.com.au/cultivating-compassion-during-the-covid-crisis>

## 1. Activity: Daily Compassion Practice

As we develop this new habit, we can use it as an opportunity to cultivate compassion, both for ourselves and all other people. In this way we Each time you wash your hands, consider saying the following words silently in your mind. Say these words slowly and deliberately, and as you do try to connect to a genuine feeling of care and concern for all humans, including yourself:

*May all beings be safe.*

*May all beings be healthy.*

*May all beings feel loved, supported and cared for.*

## 2. Meditation:

'I Wish for You' Meditation in the App (Explore > Adults > Mindfulness Foundations > Mindfulness 204)

## 3. Meditation:

'Empathy and Compassion' Meditation in the App (Explore > Classroom > Mindfulness for Educators)

## 4. Watch: Health Psychologist Kelly McGonigal

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0UvC7V8ZRQ>

Kelly McGonigal explains in this informative talk that the self that is really good at change is not the self of self-criticism but is actually the self of self-acceptance and self-compassion.

## 5. Self-Compassion Break

 <https://self-compassion.org/exercise-2-self-compassion-break/>

- Think of an area of life that is causing you stress. Bring that situation to mind and see if you can feel in the body where it is causing you stress and emotional discomfort. Say to yourself the following:
- This is a moment of suffering. This is mindfulness.
  - Other options include: This is a moment of discomfort, there is pain, hurt, this is stress.
- Suffering is a part of life. This is common humanity.
  - Other options include: Other people feel this way, I am not alone, We all struggle in our lives.
  - Now put your hands over your heart, feel the warmth of your hands and the gentle touch on your chest or adopt a soothing touch that is right for you.
- May I be kind to myself.
  - You can also ask yourself, "what do I need to hear right now to express kindness to myself." Is there a phrase that speaks to you in your particular situation, such as:
    - May I give myself the compassion I need
    - May I learn to accept myself as I am
    - May I be strong
- You can use this self-compassion practice anytime when you feel you need to evoke the three aspects of self-compassion.