



How to Create a Culture of Self-Care in Your School



By Ashley Watters

Modern classrooms are a reflection of the fast-paced world we live in. Multiple tasks and students consistently vie for your attention. In this kind of brisk environment, self-care becomes extremely important for educators.

Self-care is not synonymous with selfish

Teaching is a true balancing act of attending to the needs of many different people. You give attention to the needs of your family, instruct and support your students, answer to administrators, address parental concerns, assist colleagues, and often, partake in little self-care. For many educators, the order of this list may be all too familiar.

These dependencies illustrate just how many people rely on you as an educator. If you're going to be the best you can be, self-care needs to take a front seat.

While you may recognize the need for self-care, guilt can creep up and rear its ugly head, making you question the validity of your personal efforts. You may find yourself questioning your motives. "Shouldn't I be helping a student?" Or maybe you ask, "isn't it more important that I get caught up on grading?" or "maybe I should organize my lessons for next week."

But the truth is that your ability to accomplish those tasks is seriously impeded when you are overworked and stressed. There's a reason that airplane attendants instruct you to put on your own mask first. You can't help others if you yourself are deprived of critical necessities.

Devoting time to self-care actually translates into being a stronger and more resilient educator. One [HuffPost article](#) reports that "Encouraging employees to tend to their own health and wellbeing produces a number of benefits, including reduced absenteeism and staff turnover, reduced healthcare costs, happier employees, and greater productivity overall."

You can't be a stronger teacher if you are burnt out, sick, or unable to focus. Focusing on yourself lets you recharge your batteries, allowing you to be more effective and tolerant in the classroom. Do yourself and your students a favor and take some time for you. Remember, self-care is not selfish — it's necessary.

Self-care starts with a supportive culture

If self-care is so important, why is it often seen as lacking among educators? The sad truth is that teachers are not always supported in the pursuit of their self-care goals. Teachers are more likely to partake in self-care if they are in a supportive school environment.

A positive school culture is the foundation for healthy behaviors. When educators are happy and motivated, they can develop [healthy student relationships](#) and engage in more meaningful teaching. But developing a culture that supports personal growth and self-care doesn't happen without the active participation of administration and teachers. You have to get everyone on board and work together toward a shared vision.

It's difficult to convince yourself that you need to engage in self-care when you feel as though the collective perspective on the subject is negative. Here are some ways you can help develop a positive school culture.

Develop or participate in groups or events where teachers are celebrated.

Teachers need to feel valued. Educators who feel their efforts are respected and appreciated are [driven to meet higher standards and they aren't affected by minor setbacks or problems](#). They have a healthier approach to student challenges and disciplinary problems. Generally, they are more energized and able to tackle the day.

Set appropriate work/life boundaries and support your fellow teachers who do the same.

Teaching is more than a profession. Good educators are invested in their students and they care about the personal and academic growth of their charges. But teachers have personal lives that also need their attention. [Setting appropriate boundaries](#) is essential. Those with a satisfying personal life will be happier and more effective teachers.

Engage colleagues in your physical health goals.

Physical fitness helps to improve your positive mindset and increases your productivity. [Inc reports](#) that “working out causes your brain to secrete a chemical called neurotrophic factor, which boosts brain function.” Taking care of yourself with exercise actually means you’ll be better equipped to face the day! Encouraging your colleagues to take part in that journey and help keep you accountable sets the precedent for a more positive school culture.

Practice forgiveness.

Forgiveness should extend to your colleagues, students, and, most importantly, yourself. We all have demands on our attention that extend beyond our professional reach. Forgive yourself and others when things arise that make personal time necessary. Respecting that balance and exercising forgiveness for all who need it will help build a healthy school culture and lead to a more understanding you.

Remember, you can empower your students and colleagues by taking better care of yourself!

Ashley gained a passion for all things writing by spending years teaching a high school English class. She founded [Contenthusiast](#) so that she could spend her days hovering over a keyboard. When she isn't writing, you can find her traveling with family or buried in a book.