

School Professionals and COVID-19

The daily stress caused by the virus, social distancing and a deep financial crisis have had a big impact on all people in our community. It is normal to experience feelings of isolation, anxiety and uncertainty in this abnormal situation. Prioritizing your mental health and staying connected is more important than ever.

Self-Compassion for school professionals:

We want to share an article focusing on the importance of using self-compassion, and how practicing self-compassion can help prevent burn out amongst school professionals. Here is the link: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/self_compassion_for_teachers

One main take away from the article is: "The first component of self-compassion is self-kindness, or treating ourselves with the same care we would give a loved one. As teachers, we care for our students every day but often forget about caring for ourselves." One way we often practice this with students is by asking the question "What would you say to a friend or family member who was in the same situation?" We often wouldn't even think about saying the things we say to ourselves to someone else, so why do we think it's ok to treat ourselves in that way? We challenge you to practice this skill during situations where the inner critic is strong. This article has a few "in the moment" exercises to practice self-compassion as well.

Mindfulness Exercises for school professionals:

Another article for this week provides specific ways to practice self-compassion/mindfulness through especially stressful times dealing with COVID-19. There are short recorded guided meditations connected to the descriptions of the different exercises, and descriptions of how the different practices can help ease stress and anxiety. As we continue to deal with all of the unknowns and worries about students, we urge everyone to try an exercise from the list and incorporate any helpful practices into daily routine.

<https://centerformsc.org/10-self-compassion-practices-for-covid-19/>

Journaling to Cope

Journaling is an exercise often used as a means of pursuing mental health and wellbeing. Here is some information on how journaling works and why it works. Creating a written or typed narration of your thoughts, experiences, and feelings provides you with an opportunity to make internal experiences tangible. Establishing a tangible narrative through journaling allows you:

1. Sift through your cognitions (or thoughts)
2. Shift your perspective(s) when necessary
3. Unpack/explore and/or process thoughts, feelings, and experiences

The above enables you to determine how to move forward in a manner that facilitates your mental health and wellbeing and is consistent with your life goals

Journaling Prompts: Reflecting on the new (temporary) Normal

What has changed in your day-to-day life since COVID-19 became “a thing”? Which changes have caused the greatest imposition(s)? Which changes have led to the most distress? Which changes, if any, have been pleasantly surprising? Which changes have led to some relief of distress?

Whole-Brain Child Virtual Book Study – Beginning 4/24/2020 @3pm

In this group, educators and school staff will learn concepts from Dr. Dan Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson’s book *The Whole-Brain Child* to assist them in gaining practical tools and strategies to help their students manage daily challenges and build skills for the future. The book study group will be divided into 5 sessions with each section going over a portion of the book. For access to the Zoom link, please email dkirk@tanagerplace.org.

Additional Resources:

The Gazette has created a listing of available resources for [businesses](#) and [residents](#). There are several local mental health agencies currently providing services by phone or telehealth. Most local mental health agencies have immediate openings.

Virtual support groups, crisis hot lines or warm lines are available:

- Tanager Place Support Groups – reach out to schoolbasedsup@tanagerplace.org for more information. Available for
 - Caregivers
 - Educators

- Foundation 2 Crisis Line at 319-362-2174
- Abbe Health Warm Line at 844-775-WARM (9276)
- Your Life Iowa at 855-581-8111 (talk) or 8550-895-8398 (text)
<https://yourlifeiowa.org/> for information or chat

In addition, many local school districts and Grant Wood Area Education Agency (GWAEA) have resources available online.