

# SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL): TEACHER SELF-CARE

*SEL Issue Brief, Part I*



"You are a person first, a teacher second. Self-care is fundamentally about prioritizing your own health and happiness so that you flourish as a human being. The added bonus is that when you do, your students will get the best of you instead of what's left of you."

Ellen Ronalds Keene, *High School Teacher*  
[Self-Care for Teachers](#)



## FREE SEL RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF

### TRAUMA AND RESILIENCE

Two online introductory courses focused on recognizing trauma and building resilience in students offered by Starr Commonwealth, one for [teachers](#) and one for [school counselors](#).

### TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS

Two online introductory courses on [Trust Based Relationships Intervention](#) and [Trauma Informed Classrooms](#) offered by the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development.

### SEL FOR TEACHERS

Two online courses focused on helping teachers build their own SEL skills and developing strategies for teaching these skills to students, one offered by the [PLACE](#) and one by the [Dibble Institute](#).

## SELF-CARE FOR TEACHERS: NOW MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER!

*by Lorilei Swanson, PhD, LMFT, LPC*

Teachers have the highest stress rate of any other career. As a teacher you have chosen a profession that requires you to spend much of your time and energy taking care of others often at the expense of taking care of your own needs. The disruptions caused by COVID-19 have only added to the anxiety, worry, and stress you typically experience. Self-care is necessary now more than ever for you to maintain good mental health and continue to do what you do best...TEACH!

Researchers at the [Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence](#) found that teachers who have well-developed emotional skills are more satisfied with their jobs and experience decreased feelings of burnout. Your ability to recognize emotions accurately, understand their causes, label them accurately, express them comfortably, and regulate them effectively serves as a protective factor and has a ripple effect on your students. The self-care habits you instill today will lead to better teacher-student relationships, and students who are more engaged in learning, and more willing to take risks and persist in the face of difficulty.

All students and their families have experienced some form of trauma associated with the effects of the current pandemic. Students returning to school in the fall will need you to be strong and resilient to help them move through past traumatic experiences and to guide them through the uncharted territory of school reopening in 2020. The more sensitive schools are to meeting your emotional needs, the better you will be able to support students and families now and during school reopening. The resources shared in this issue will help you develop the strategies you need to support your own social and emotional well-being and at the same time give you the tools you need to support trauma impacted students who may be entering a school environment that is no longer familiar to them.



## EMPHASIS ON TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS



by Julia Beaty, LISW-CP, TBRI® Practitioner

Amidst global trauma and prolonged isolation from one another, how do we cultivate trusting relationships? The first step is Connection. As a pillar of [Trust-Based Relational Intervention® \(TBRI®\) Connection](#) is the foundation on which we build all other capacities for life. So how do we connect? TBRI® offers three specific ways: Engagement Strategies, Mindfulness Strategies, and Giving Voice. With the current swirl of continuous input, our minds can easily shift into “survival” mode, limiting thoughtful reflection. A timely tool, Mindfulness Strategies help us answer, “What do I bring to this interaction from my own history?” to more flexibly respond to others’ needs and be aware of others’ perceptions of our voice, presence, and interactions.

Not only must we prioritize Connection with students this upcoming year, but more immediately, for ourselves and our personal lives. We must give ourselves permission to candidly answer the question, “What do I bring to this interaction from my own history, both pre-COVID-19 and presently?” That question not only shifts us into mindfulness but gives voice to our own needs. As community caretakers accustomed to self-sacrifice, in the long-term, we limit our depth of connection to and ability to care for others when we ignore cracks in our relational containers and lack mindful, full attention to our needs. Though the work is hard, the fruits of hope and healing are worthwhile, and as Dr. Karyn Purvis’ words gently caution us, “*You cannot lead a child to a place of healing until you have gone there yourself.*”

Yes, your school community will need you to lead in (re)building trusting relationships this school year, but first, you must pause to notice and care for your own needs.

*Take a Moment, BREATHE and Be Present.*

## TEACHER SELF-CARE STRATEGIES

by Laurann Gallitto, MMFT, RYT-200

As a dedicated (and usually busy) educator, you may need a reminder that practicing self-care is essential to your well-being, especially during times of uncertainty or overwhelming transitional periods.

Here are three suggested ideas for practicing self-care while schools are closed or for use when schools reopen:

1. Look for small ways to take care of yourself throughout the day. You may try deep breathing and/or meditation, taking a moment to listen to music or enjoy silence, exercising, or dedicating time in nature to sit or walk.
2. Reflect on your feelings and needs. By recognizing what is within your control and what is not, you may be able to think more clearly about what you need presently and in the future.
3. Acknowledge moments of joy and gratitude. You may want to write these down and post your list in a place that you see every day (or privately in a journal) for a positive daily boost or ask your students to share their own.

Incorporating these daily or weekly practices will not only help with managing responses to stressors, but also promote empathy, resiliency, and loving kindness within yourself, your students, and your classroom families.

For more ideas: [Mindful Teachers](#)

