



Breathe
FOR
Change

Breathe For Compassion
Self-Care Resources

Breathe For Compassion : Self-Care Practice

*Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded.
It's a relationship between equals. Only when we know our own
darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others.
Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity.”*
- Pema Chödrön



This month we continue to dive into a topic central to our work as educators: compassion.

Having compassion, the ability to understand another's emotions and the desire to alleviate their suffering, makes us feel connected. It gives us purpose, and grounds us in our individual and collective power to transform our experience as human beings.

In such a stressful profession that can often be isolating, learning to tap into compassion is vital to keeping us engaged in our larger school and global community.

So how do we cultivate compassion? Fortunately, research shows that the mind-body practices we have been doing all year are already increasing our capacity for compassionate behavior. For example, a study conducted by researchers from Harvard and Northeastern University shows that eight weeks of a regular meditation practice tripled the likelihood of compassionate behavior, even under conditions known to discourage acts of kindness.

That's the beauty of consistent self-care; as we increase our ability to love ourselves, we enhance our ability to extend love to the partners, family, friends, colleagues and students in our lives. Practicing the techniques in this guide both in your classroom and in your own life will support you in cultivating compassion.

**Every day we positively impact our students' lives when we pay attention to their needs.
Please make sure you have some time to Breathe For Change in your own life
so you can sustain and grow that impact!**

PERSONAL WELLBEING STRATEGY: CULTIVATING LOVING-KINDNESS

Adapted from ReSurfacing® by Harry Palmer

This exercise can be done anywhere that people congregate (at school, the grocery store, on the bus, at a park, etc.). It can be practiced, first, unobtrusively from some distance. As you gain comfort with your compassion practice, you may try it with a partner, a colleague, or someone who presents a challenge in your teaching. Make sure to do all five steps on the same person.

With attention on the person; soft gaze and deep breath:

STEP 1

Repeat to yourself: “Just like me, this person is seeking some happiness for their life.”

STEP 2

Repeat to yourself: “Just like me, this person is trying to avoid suffering in their life.”

STEP 3

Repeat to yourself: “Just like me, this person has known sadness, loneliness, and despair.”

STEP 4

Repeat to yourself: “Just like me, this person is seeking to fulfill their needs.”

STEP 5

Repeat to yourself: “Just like me, this person is learning about life.”

Variations:

1. Practice this with your partner and family members to increase your understanding of each other.
2. Practice this on someone who challenges, antagonizes, or bothers you.
3. Practice this on a challenging student.



END OF THE DAY MINDFUL MOVEMENT RESET

Practice this short mindful movement sequence at the end of your school day to help reset your body, mind, and spirit!



1. Start in **Restorative Bound Angle Pose**: Breathe deeply here, feeling into the Openness across your chest. Take time here cultivate loving-kindness for yourself.

2. Move your bolster and reset on your back. Cross one ankle over the opposite knee for **Supine Pigeon Pose**. Send a few deep breaths down into your outer hip. Switch sides.



3. Hug your knees into your chest for **Apanasana**. Then rock and roll forward to all fours. Take spinal movements in Cat and Cow. Press back into Downward-Facing Dog and peddle out your feet and open the backs of your legs.



4. Walk your hands back to your feet and roll up to stand. Take a few rounds of 1/2 Sun Salutations, moving one breath per movement.



5. Step your left foot back and lower the back knee into **Low Lunge**. Lift your arms overhead and take a few rounds of breath here. Exhale and rock your hips back as you lengthen your front leg into **Half-Monkey Pose**. Take a short flow before repeating on the second side.



6. Step your feet wide for **Wide-Legged Standing Forward Fold**. Exhale to hinge at your hips and fold forward. Inhale to lengthen the spine into a half-lift. Exhale to release your head towards the ground. Stay for a few rounds of breath. You can shift your weight side to side and play with variations within the fold.



7. Have a seat. Bring the soles of your feet together in front of you for **Seated Bound Angle Pose**. Take an inhale to lengthen the spine and fold forward on the exhale. Hold the pose for 3-5 rounds of breath.



8. Set up your **Restorative Bound Angle Pose** one last time. Recline back onto your bolster. Open your arms wide and take a few big rounds of breath. Release your hands to the floor and observe any changes in your body and state of mind. Rest here for 2-3 minutes.



9. When you're ready, release everything into final rest: Corpse Pose. Set a timer and rest here for at least 7 minutes.



10. Sit up into a supportive seat. Sit for a few minutes of meditation. Practice a Loving-Kindness meditation from this Self-Care Guide!

These practices are inspired by Breathe For Change's 200-hour Wellness, SEL and Yoga Teacher Training for Educators. If you wish to access additional resources or professional development opportunities, please visit www.breatheforchange.com.