



USE WITH:

n/a



GRADE LEVEL:

Upper elementary, middle school, or high school



CONTEXT:

Remote friendly

EDUCATOR PRACTICE

Gain Perspective on a Challenging Event

Get a fresh perspective on a challenging event with a student.

Created by [Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley](#)

Description:

This activity enables teachers to question the negative thoughts they may have after a stressful experience, helping them navigate strong emotions and ultimately respond more constructively to students and colleagues.

Est. time to complete:
30 minutes

Steps:

1. If possible, make time for this practice soon after a difficult event (in the context of an interaction with a student) or shortly after you experience tension. Be kind and compassionate with yourself as you mentally prepare to revisit an unpleasant event or thought that has challenged you. As you reflect on this experience, remember that there are other people in the world who share your emotional state in that moment. You are not alone in feeling sad, angry, or fearful.
2. Write down responses to each of the following questions to explore your thoughts.
 - Identify the stressful event here. What happened?
 - What thoughts am I having? What am I imagining?
 - How much do I believe those thoughts? (Rate 0-100)

- What do these thoughts make me feel?
 - How strong is this feeling? (Rate 1-100)
3. Write down responses to each of the following questions to challenge your thoughts.
- What evidence do I have that this is true or accurate?
 - What evidence do I have that this is not true—or, at least, not completely true?
 - Is there another way to look at this? If so, what is it?
 - What's the worst thing that could happen? Would I still be able to live through it?
 - What's the best thing that could happen?
 - What will most likely happen?
 - What might happen if I keep repeating this thought in my head?
 - What might happen if I changed my thinking about this?
 - What might I tell my friend if this happened to her or him?
4. Now reflect on the process. How much do I still believe the negative thought now? After going through this process, is there any other action I might choose to take now?

Tips for Educators:

- This practice can be especially helpful in gaining perspective after an emotionally challenging interaction with a student.
- Consider sharing with a trusted colleague or peer your reflections at the end of this practice. Shared reflections might also be more fruitful if both have gone through this process individually before coming together.



Inspired by:

1. Troy, A. S., Wilhelm, F. H., Shallcross, A. J., & Mauss, I. B. (2010). Seeing the silver lining: cognitive reappraisal ability moderates the relationship between stress and depressive symptoms. *Emotion, 10*(6), 783–795. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0020262>