



USE WITH:

n/a



GRADE LEVEL:

Upper elementary, middle school, or high school



CONTEXT:

Remote friendly

EDUCATOR PRACTICE

# Take a Self-Compassion Break

A brief exercise to support you through stressful moments at school.

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

## Description:

This practice can help you self-soothe during times of stress at school. Teachers who are more mindful and self-compassionate foster more emotionally supportive relationships with students in their classrooms.

Est. time to complete:

**15 minutes**

## Steps:

1. Take a few deep breaths and settle into a quiet mental space for reflection.
2. Think of a situation in your life that is difficult and causing you stress. As you bring this situation to mind, notice any tension in your body. Now say to yourself, “This is a moment of suffering.” When you say this, it is a form of mindfulness—of simply noticing what is going on for you in the present moment, without judging that experience as good or bad. You can also say to yourself, “This hurts,” or, “This is stress.” Use whatever statement feels most natural to you.
3. Next, say to yourself, “Suffering is a part of life.” This is a recognition of your common humanity with others—that all people have trying experiences, and these experiences give you something in common with the rest of humanity rather than mark you as abnormal or “not okay.” Other options for this statement include, “Other people feel this way,” “I’m not alone,” or “We all struggle in our lives.”

4. Now, put your hands over your heart (if that feels comfortable); feel the warmth of your hands and the gentle touch on your chest, and say, “May I be kind to myself.” This is a way to express self-kindness. You can consider other phrases that speak more to you, such as, “May I give myself the compassion that I need,” “May I accept myself as I am,” “May I learn to accept myself as I am,” “May I forgive myself,” “May I be strong,” or “May I be patient.”
5. After you are done, reflect by asking yourself the following questions: What does it feel like to soothe yourself in this way? Did you notice any resistance in your own body as you engaged in this activity? Consider the three components of the self-compassion break. Which components were most powerful or meaningful in your experience: Mindfulness (“This is a moment of suffering.”)? Common humanity (“I am not alone in my suffering.”)? Self-Kindness (physical touch; “May I be kind to myself.”)?

### Tips for Educators:

- It’s important to note that some people—particularly those who are part of marginalized or oppressed groups—may unfairly experience more suffering than others. It’s important not to minimize or invalidate this experience in any way. While suffering is a universal human experience, recognizing that should not mean that we tacitly accept oppression or inequities, or ignore the sources of suffering of marginalized groups.
- One thing to keep in mind is that having compassion and patience for yourself allows you to have more of it for other people. In pursuing this practice, it may be helpful to be conscientious of how this affects the degree of patience and compassion you feel for students.

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### Inspired by:

1. Neff, K.D., & Germer C.K. (2013). A pilot study and randomized controlled trial of the mindful self-compassion program. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 69(1), 28-44. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.21923>