

Promoting Educational Excellence and Resilience for Students and Educators

PEER is a resource for educators to share with students to build capacity to cope with the stress of demanding academic environments in order to **enhance academic success and well-being.**

This resource contains **evidence-based strategies** to enhance students' resilience and help them cope with stress.

Each strategy is identified in a box like this → **STRATEGY #1**

Throughout this resource, the superscript numbers indicate research citations that match the numbered references in the list on the last pages of this guide.

- Pages 1-3** → Information on the strategies (**What? Why? How?**)
- Pages 4-5** → **Step-by-step practice guide** to help you apply and practice these strategies.
- Pages 6-7** → Reference list

The World Health Organization and UNICEF have highlighted an **urgent** need to provide support for youth mental health and well-being globally.^{1,2}



BUT WHY EDUCATION?

Providing youth with mental health support is important because it does not **only** affect their well-being, but can also **impact** their **academic performance** and future **success**.^{3,4}



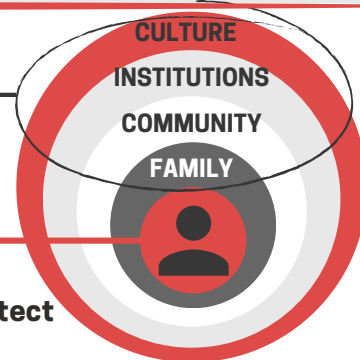
Skills that help build resilience can be taught using the **vehicle of education** to **equip educators and students** at all levels to build the ability to cope with stressful and difficult circumstances in healthy ways.

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is an **internal** experience that occurs when we **perceive** that the demands of our environment exceed our ability to meet them.^{5,6}

We can **influence** but we **cannot control**.

We **CAN** control at the individual level



Evidence-based strategies and healthy coping can create a buffer to protect us from the harmful effects of stress that we often cannot control.

There are many stressors that are external to us and that we can't control.



For example, we can't control the pressures family members place on us to succeed academically



or stressors that arise from our economic or social contexts



BUT what we CAN control is how we choose to respond to this stress

The stress response model^{6,7}

Take a stressful situation for example...

SITUATION
There is an important exam tomorrow



EMOTIONS

anxiety, frustration, fear

THOUGHTS

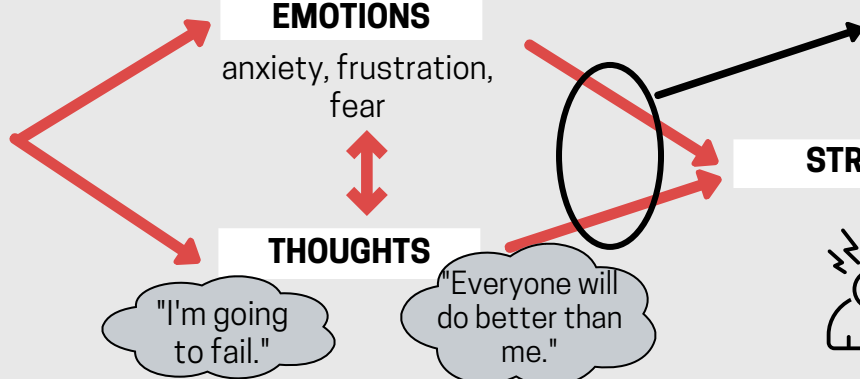
"I'm going to fail."

"Everyone will do better than me."

STRESS



This is where we can intervene

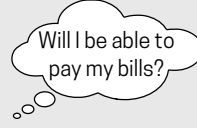
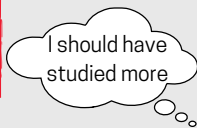


AREAS FOR RESILIENCE-BUILDING



**PAUSE/
BREAK**

Our minds tend to focus on either :
the past or the future



But learning to pause/break can help us by:

paying attention to what we sense or experience⁸⁻¹⁰

In the present moment

On purpose

With nonjudgmental acceptance



**POSITIVE
AWARENESS**

The human brain is predisposed to notice **negative information** (e.g., criticism, upsetting news) in our daily lives.¹⁴



Fortunately, research shows that increasing our ability to **notice the positive things** that happen to us is protective against the harmful effects of stress.^{15, 16}



**KINDNESS TO
SELF**

We may think being **self-critical** is key to pushing ourselves and maintaining high standards, but it can actually make us feel worse AND be **less productive**.¹¹



Instead, we can learn **new ways to cope** with challenges by **practicing kindness** towards ourselves.^{12, 13}



**SOCIAL
CONNECTION**

Up to **70%** of youth report feelings of **loneliness** which has an impact on **academic performance, health, and stress**.^{17, 18}

So it's important to enhance the **quality** of existing friendships & to build a sense of **community and connection**.



STRATEGIES TO PAUSE/BREAK



**Progressive
Muscle Relaxation**

This is a strategy that helps turn off the body's stress response by tensing and relaxing muscles.¹⁹⁻²¹

STRATEGY #1
CLICK FOR AN
EXAMPLE



Calming Breath

This breathing exercise is an effective strategy to calm the body.²¹⁻²⁶

STRATEGY #2
CLICK FOR AN
EXAMPLE

STRATEGY FOR SLEEP



YOGA NIDRA

This is a practice that will help to achieve a deep state of relaxation to promote sleep.^{27, 28}

STRATEGY #3
CLICK FOR AN
EXAMPLE

COMING TO YOUR SENSES

STRATEGY #4

Using your senses is a great way to ground yourself in the present moment and take a pause. This strategy helps us become aware of our senses in the present moment and helps us "drop into now".^{25, 26, 29}



**CLICK EACH SENSE FOR
SHORT GUIDED VIDEOS**

PAUSE/BREAK IN THE CLASSROOM

When can you use these?



In moments of high stress (e.g., before an important exam or task)



For day-to-day calming (e.g., when students are feeling restless and agitated)



During transition periods (e.g., in between classes, topics, activities)

Try applying these strategies in the classroom (see the Practice Guide for instructions on how to apply). It would be helpful to practice **before a stressful exam** or **dedicate 3 minutes before or after transition periods**.



Those who don't need it will benefit just as much as those who do need it!

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE POSITIVE AWARENESS

NOTICING POSITIVE MOMENTS



Use your senses to enhance **positive awareness** during routine activities (e.g., when you drink your morning tea, notice how wonderful it smells).¹⁵

Take the time to enjoy some of your favourite things using your senses



THREE GOOD THINGS

STRATEGY #5

CLICK FOR AN EXAMPLE



Practice noticing the good things (big or small) that happen to enhance positive awareness.³⁰⁻³³



GRATITUDE JOURNAL

STRATEGY #6

CLICK FOR AN EXAMPLE



Keep a journal to write down anything that you are grateful for 1-2 times per week. Doing this regularly can help enhance feelings of gratitude and positive awareness.³⁰⁻³³

POSITIVE AWARENESS IN THE CLASSROOM

When can you use these?

When you or your students...



Have a **hard time** recognizing the good things that happen day-to-day



Feel like good things aren't happening and **feel discouraged**



Feel caught up worrying about the **past or future**

Build these strategies **into classroom time as activities** (e.g., keeping a gratitude journal, build it into assignments or silent activities)



For example, you can take a silent moment to have students reflect on 3 good things.

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE OUR KINDNESS TO SELF

RECHARGING WITH SELF-CARE

STRATEGY #7

CLICK FOR AN EXAMPLE



Build self-care into the classroom by **checking in** with students, giving them opportunities to **take breaks and move**, and setting **reasonable expectations** of what students can handle.^{34, 35}

SELF-COMPASSION PRACTICE

STRATEGY #8

CLICK FOR AN EXAMPLE



This is a guided reflection practice that helps us be more **supportive** and **compassionate** towards ourselves and others.³⁶⁻³⁸



KINDNESS TO SELF IN THE CLASSROOM

When can you use these?

When you or your students...



Feel self-critical about performance on a test or assignment



Start to doubt your own abilities, successes, and/or progress

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE SOCIAL CONNECTION

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

STRATEGY #9

CLICK FOR MORE INFORMATION



Can be big or small, and the recipient doesn't even have to be aware of them!³⁹⁻⁴¹

SOCIAL CONNECTION IN THE CLASSROOM

Encourage students to...




Identify a topic that is interesting to them and join a community that is related to it.



Make an effort to pass it on every time they are the recipient of an act of kindness.

ENHANCING RESILIENCE FOR STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS: PRACTICE GUIDE

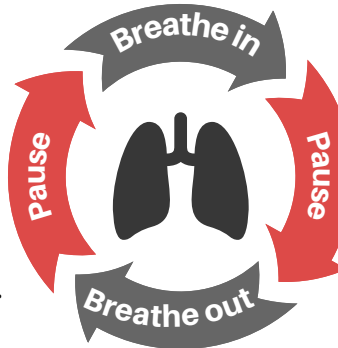
STRATEGY #1: PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

- 1** Sit on a chair  (hold 5 seconds)
- 2** Tense your face and neck...  Then relax them... (hold 5 seconds)
- 3** Tense your shoulders...  Then relax them... (hold 5 seconds)
- 4** Tense your arms...  Then relax them... (hold 5 seconds)
- 5** Squeeze your fists...  Then relax them...  (hold 5 seconds)
- 6** Tense up your legs...  Then relax them...

Reminder

Breathe in relaxation...
Breathe out tension...

STRATEGY #2: CALMING BREATH



Repeat steps 1-4 for at least three breaths.

Note: In order to really experience a calming effect, it's important to:

- Exhale for longer than you are inhaling
- Take a moment to pause between every inhale and exhale
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth

STRATEGY #3: YOGA NIDRA

ZZZ

Let your body sink into the bed or mat and get comfortable.

Take a deep breath in through the nose and a breath out through the mouth.

Become aware of different parts of your body, for a brief moment, one after the other.

FINGERS, HAND

WRIST, ARM

SHOULDER, NECK

LEG, ANKLE

FEET, TOES



Notice the sensations

- Do this throughout your body, one side at a time.
- Move your attention from one body part to the next in quick succession (**only 1 second per body part**).

STRATEGY #4: COMING TO YOUR SENSES

Drop into now by noticing what you're experiencing without judgment.



What do you hear?
Is it loud? Is it soft?



What do you feel?
Is it rough? Smooth?



What do you see?
Do you notice colours? Shapes?

Try this with all of your senses for a minute or two for each sense! If one sense is not available to you, choose one that is comfortable for you.

Just notice what your senses are picking up and what you are experiencing. Try not to judge or make evaluations.

STRATEGY #5: THREE GOOD THINGS



Take a few minutes to write down three things that felt good today and provide as much detail as possible.



OR



What you write about can be small, everyday events or something bigger (e.g., enjoying a favourite food or accomplishing a goal).

We recommend that this should be done a few times a week, possibly right before going to bed.

STRATEGY #6: GRATITUDE JOURNAL

Use this strategy as an alternative or in addition to three good things!

- Try to add as much detail as possible when journaling
- Focus on people, events, and things that you are grateful for
- Reflect on the value that these add to your life
- Record and savour good events that were unexpected
- Only write in your journal 1-2 times per week, to keep it meaningful!

STRATEGY #7: RECHARGING WITH SELF-CARE

Self-care goes beyond just the physical... check out which areas you might need to improve on:





Do you take the time to...

- Be active? Eat regular meals?
Get enough sleep? **Physical**
- Do the things you enjoy?
Allow yourself to cry and/or laugh? **Emotional**
- Spend time with friends/family? **Social**
- Acknowledge what you are feeling?
Ask for help when you need it? **Psychological**
- Connect with nature?
Practice gratitude? Meditate? Pray? **Spiritual**

STRATEGY #8: SELF-COMPASSION PRACTICE

-  Sit comfortably, and bring your attention to your breath
 -  Bring to mind a person who you love or care for dearly
 -  Imagine sending all your wishes for well-being and happiness to that loved one
 -  Now turn the kindness and well wishes towards yourself
 -  Imagine this person sending their love and wishes for your well-being
 -  Bring your attention to your breath and notice the state of your mind and how you feel
- You can take as much or as little time as you like for each step.**

STRATEGY #9: RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p>COMMUNITY</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cook/make something for a friend Volunteer your time | <p>SCHOOL</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help someone with their school work Share study tips with others Befriend someone new | <p>WORK</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Praise a peer or co-worker on their work Check-in with a peer or co-worker to see how they're doing | <p>FAMILY</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help a sibling, partner, or parent with chores Ask about a family member's day Show appreciation |
|--|--|--|---|

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