



How to prevent teacher burnout during COVID-19

By Shara Singh

Whether you are teaching in-person, online, or in a hybrid model, COVID-19 has changed the way you teach. One thing goes without saying: you have adapted, and you continue to adapt to all of the new challenges the pandemic throws your way.

You have been busy supporting your students and helping them adjust to their new normal, all while trying to keep up with your personal and professional life. But when was the last time you checked in to see how you were doing? You consistently go out of your way to identify signs of anxiety and stress in your students, but maybe it is time you do the same for yourself.

Resources to support the mental health of students, parents, and others have been widely available, but less focus has been paid to maintaining the mental health of educators. Teachers lead by example, and paying close attention to your mental health will help you support your students in the long run.

Here are three tips to help support your mental health and prevent teacher burnout in these challenging times.

Incorporate mental health exercises into your classroom

Help support your mental health by supporting your students' mental health. Little everyday exercises can make a big

difference and can help create positive habits. From practicing gratitude and journaling, to meditating and spending time outdoors, these simple additions to your classroom routine can help you and your students relax, refocus, and recharge in an ever-changing environment.

Need easy-to-implement, evidence-informed mental health practices for your classroom? Check out the [Faith and Wellness resource](#) OECTA co-created with School Mental Health Ontario. More information about the resource is available on page 18 of this issue of *Catholic Teacher*.

Seek out connection

The shift to teaching online or interacting with your colleagues at a distance might have you feeling isolated or alone. You are probably not the only teacher feeling this way. Sometimes these feelings may cause you to withdraw even more from social interaction, but try your best not to give into this feeling.

Phone a friend you have not heard from in a while, organize a virtual meeting with your colleagues to see how everyone's week went, or find a community of educators online to connect with. The great thing about the internet is that people are only a click away. You would be surprised just how many people would be willing to help if you asked a question on social media. Going out of your way to proactively seek out connections with others will likely strengthen your existing relationships and lead you to create new meaningful relationships along the way.

Learn to manage your emotions

Does COVID-19 have you on an emotional rollercoaster? That is okay! It is important to remember that you, like many others, have not experienced anything like this before. Constant news updates and conversations about COVID-19 might have you feeling anxious or frustrated, but recognizing your emotions is the first step to managing them. Whenever you are overwhelmed with an emotion, the first step is to pause and notice what you are feeling. This allows you to better control your response. Once you recognize what you are feeling, then you can focus on shifting to more pleasant or productive emotions.

Your mental health is a journey, not a destination. We are living in a time of unprecedented stress, so it is more important now than ever to make sure you build in time to take care of yourself.

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