

TAKING CARE of THEM, TAKING CARE of YOU

10 AUTHORS
SHARE STRATEGIES FOR
STUDENT SUPPORT &
TEACHER SELF-CARE

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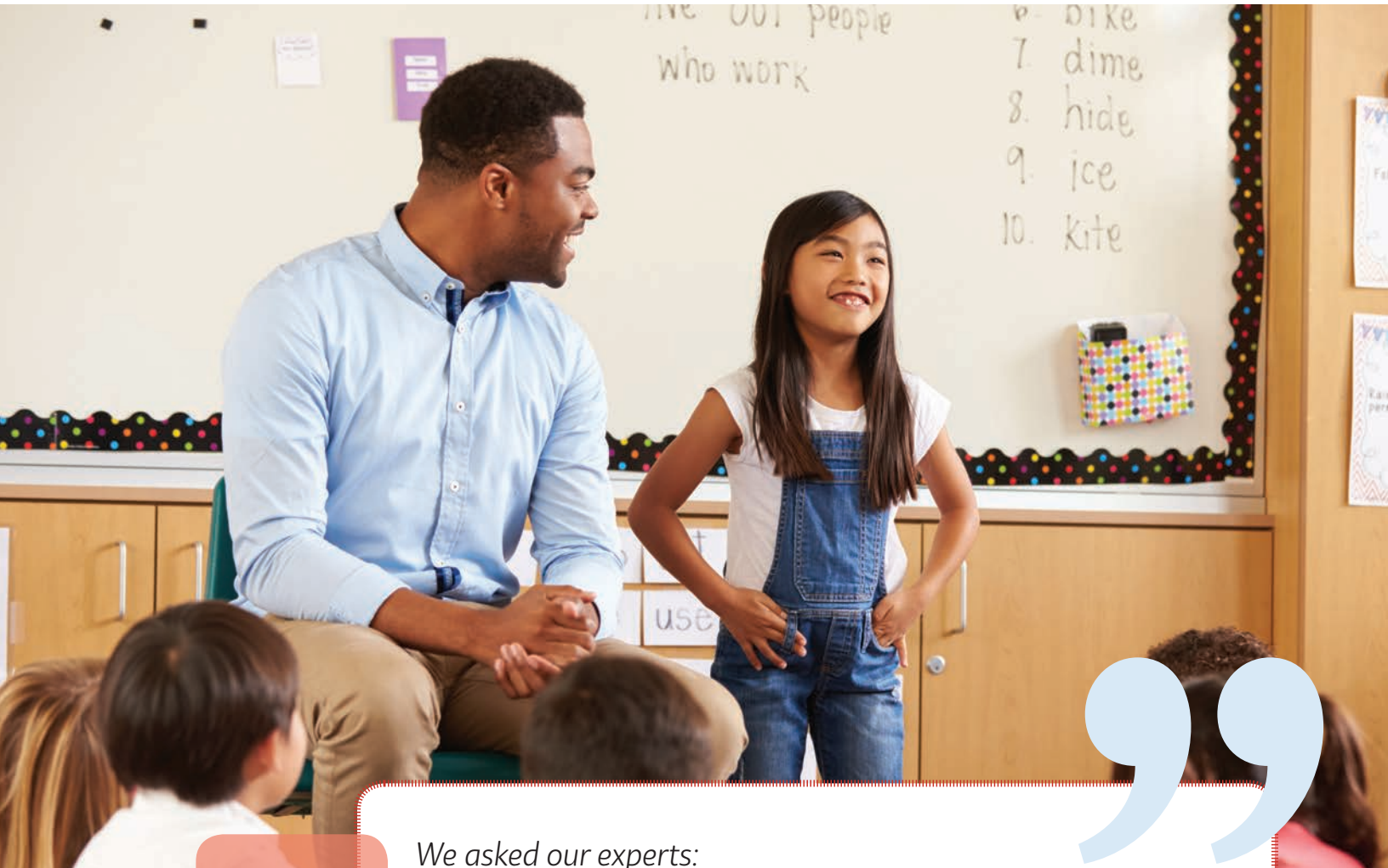
IN CLASSROOMS ACROSS THE

country, both teachers and students are struggling with the uncertainty of our new administration and its promised changes. Teachers are stressed and nervous, wondering how new developments in the U.S. education system might affect their schools and curricula. Students are stressed, too—they may be facing an increase in bullying, wrestling with questions and fears about the future, or processing the anxiety of their parents and other adults in their lives.

No matter where you stand on the issues, one thing's for sure: Everyone's feeling the effects of these uncertain times, and they need all the help they can get. That's why we at Brookes Publishing have reached out to some of our most respected authors for their best advice on helping stressed-out teachers and students. Focusing on **student support strategies** and **teacher self-care strategies**, this booklet collects their tips and ideas in one convenient place. We hope you'll come away with some great ideas you can use in your classroom this coming school year!



STUDENT SUPPORT STRATEGIES

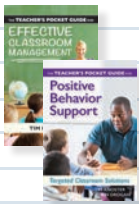


We asked our experts:

Over the past few months, some teachers have reported an uptick in bullying and higher levels of student stress and anxiety. For teachers who have observed this in their classroom, what's one real-world strategy they can use to support students struggling with social-emotional challenges?

Read on for their answers!

TIM KNOSTER, an expert on positive behavior interventions and supports, has more than 30 years of experience providing professional development to classroom teachers and teachers-to-be. Here, he suggests a few key strategies for supporting students in tumultuous times:



Tim Knoster, Ed.D., is the author of *The Teacher's Pocket Guide for Effective Classroom Management, Second Edition*, and co-author of *The Teacher's Pocket Guide for Positive Behavior Support*

Teachers can support students struggling with social-emotional challenges through a combination of

- Providing clear expectations for behavior that is respectful towards self and others
- Posting and teaching these expectations
- Giving students a high density of acknowledgment (positive reinforcement) for meeting the expectations

In tandem with this approach, it is important (perhaps now more than ever) to **develop rapport** with each and every student in the classroom, making sure that your actions communicate clearly that you care about the personal well-being of each student. It is likely that you'll establish sufficient rapport with many students without consciously thinking about it; however, in some instances, you may need to jump-start rapport. The key to establishing rapport with students who appear difficult to reach is repeated **small doses of engagement over time**. Identify 15- to 30-second windows of opportunity within non-instructional times throughout the school day to strategically build rapport with students (e.g. transitions that naturally occur throughout the day). Base your rapport-building interactions on student interests, keeping in mind that interests are unique to each student.

Remember that **rapport is built on trust**. Your students will let you connect with them, but they will do this on their own, individual timetable based in large part on when they feel they can trust you. You can reach every student—and equally important, each student is deserving of your professional effort!

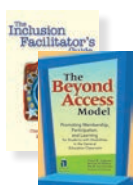


As an author, speaker, researcher, and coordinator of personnel preparation programs, **CHERYL JORGENSEN** has spent her career promoting inclusive classrooms where all students feel supported and welcomed. In her answer, she cites a four-part framework by the authors of *Reclaiming Youth at Risk* and provides her own examples of how to put it in action:

In order for children and adults to be emotionally healthy, they need a strong sense of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. Address each in the following ways in the classroom and broader school community:

- **Belonging:** Read literature that reinforces the idea that all children belong in your classroom and have valuable contributions to make. An example for young children is reading *Ian's Walk*; for older students, try *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. [For more recommendations on how to fill your classroom with diverse resources, see the *Brookes Inclusion Lab* blog post: <http://bit.ly/14DiverseResources>]
- **Mastery:** Take down charts that show all students' grades on a test or project. Instead, post pictures of each child labelled with what he or she is most proud of learning during the last week.
- **Independence:** Help all students set goals for themselves and describe the support they'll need to achieve those goals.
- **Generosity:** Find ways for all students to provide support to their classmates by posting a list of what each child is an "expert" at in classroom work so they can seek out their peers when they need help. Identify a classroom or school community service project and make sure each student has a valued role in that project.

*Brendtro, L., Brokenleg, M., & VanBockern, S. (2002). *Reclaiming youth at risk: Our hope for the future* (Rev.Ed.). Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.



Cheryl M. Jorgensen, Ph.D., is co-author of *The Inclusion Facilitator's Guide* and *The Beyond Access Model*



ONDINE GROSS is a nationally certified school psychologist who's worked in public school settings for more than 30 years. Her words of wisdom are based on her extensive personal experience working with high school students:



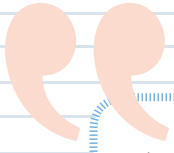
Ondine Gross is the author of *Restore the Respect: How to Mediate School Conflicts and Keep Students Learning*

Relationships matter, and the most important school relationships are those between teachers and students. When teachers **understand and support** their students, **students feel safer** in the classroom and anxiety and stress decrease. I asked students in the high school where I work to tell me some ways for teachers to establish a positive relationship with them. Here are some of their answers:

1. "Spend time to get to know us."
2. "Ask our preferred pronoun."
3. "Give us a way to let you know when we are having a bad day."

Students learn best when they believe their teachers respect and care about them. If students feel truly supported in their classrooms, their social-emotional adjustment improves.





I am a strong supporter of using **mindfulness techniques in the classroom**. Mindfulness techniques are powerful because they don't cost a thing, are easy to teach and use, and can be incredibly effective for a wide range of learners.

So often the techniques we use in classrooms are reactive. Mindfulness practices are proactive; we can use them to **prevent behavior challenges**, **alleviate stress**, and even help students tap into feelings of **gratitude and compassion**. Teachers can use meditation, yoga, mindful observation, and breathing exercises with an entire group of students; they can be used to begin the day, prepare for tasks, or deal with particular challenges. The techniques can also be shared with individual students who have struggles such as anxiety and emotional challenges. Educators may even want to write some of these practices into behavior plans.

Keep in mind that mindfulness techniques can be used for any student, even those with more significant and complex disabilities. If a student cannot speak, a teacher can still read a guided meditation to that individual or model a breathing exercise for him or her.

To begin using mindfulness in the classroom, check out websites like www.gonoodle.com and YouTube to find free video tutorials. You can also use meditation apps or books to find ideas. Finally, check out www.mindfulteachers.org for resources, tips, and general information.

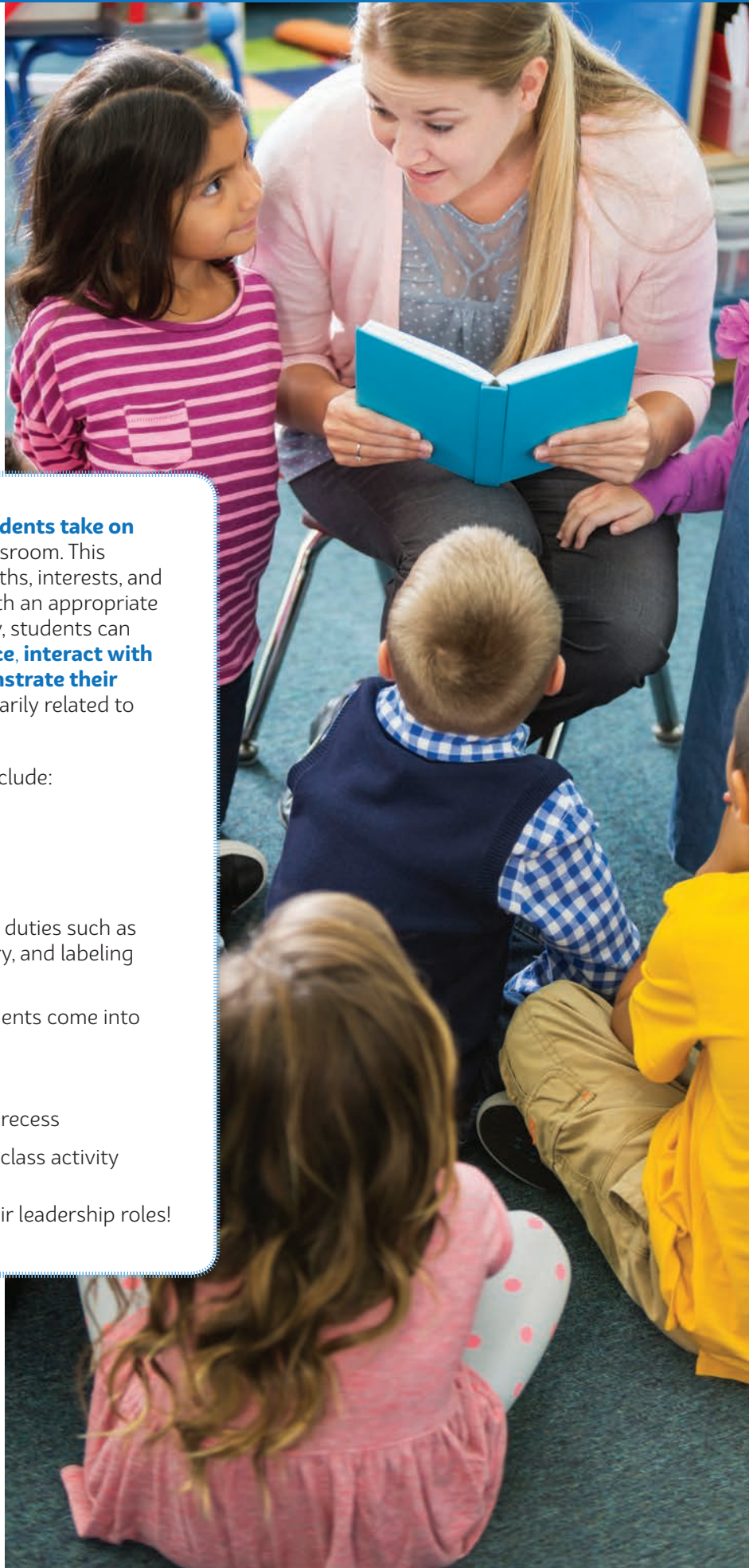


Inclusive education expert **PAULA KLUTH** brings her dynamic presentations to teachers across the country, showing them how to create classrooms where all children learn and belong. Here, she talks about how mindfulness is key to helping students with social-emotional challenges.



Paula Kluth, Ph.D., is the author of many popular books on inclusive education, including *You're Going to Love this Kid!*, *Pedro's Whale, Just Give Him the Whale!*, and *A Land We Can Share*.

A seasoned educator and creator of the popular blog *The Inclusive Class*, **NICOLE EREDICS** inspires and motivates teachers nationwide with her practical tips and recommendations. She points to the key role of leadership in empowering students and helping them develop strong social-emotional skills:



I look for opportunities to **let all my students take on leadership roles** in and outside the classroom. This involves identifying the student's strengths, interests, and talents. Then, the student is matched with an appropriate leadership job. Through this opportunity, students can learn **responsibility**, develop **confidence**, **interact with others** in the school setting, and **demonstrate their abilities** in a situation that is not necessarily related to academic performance.

Some examples of student leadership include:

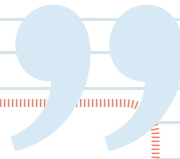
- distributing notices
- making daily announcements
- assisting the librarian
- helping the teacher with classroom duties such as filing papers, tidying the class library, and labeling notebooks
- being a morning greeter when students come into the classroom
- reading aloud with a student
- playing with other students during recess
- helping another student work on a class activity

I love watching my students shine in their leadership roles!



The Inclusive Class

Nicole Eredics is a blogger at *The Inclusive Class* and the author of an upcoming Brookes book on inclusive education. Stay tuned to www.brookespublishing.com for details!



JULIE CAUSTON and **KATE MACLEOD** are popular inclusion experts, authors, and in-demand presenters. Here, they suggest some great activities to counteract bullying and spread joy in your classroom.

As teachers, we can help counteract stress, bullying, and anxiety in many ways. One big idea is to **strategically cultivate joy and positivity in the classroom**. By doing this, we can actually raise our students' feelings of happiness and help them re-experience positive experiences in their body. Here are a few strategies that can help students cultivate and share feelings of joy and positivity.

Quick Jot: At the end of the day or class period, have students close their eyes and think of a positive moment. It can be a small moment or a big one. Have them write or draw that experience, depending on the age and writing skills of the student. Invite them to consider and feel each detail in the experience.

Turn and Talk: End each day or class period by having students stop, find a partner, and share one happy moment. For students who may not want to talk, or who do not speak to communicate, you can invite them to draw/write about something that makes them happy. When they are done sharing, ask students to give each other a high five!

Blog It: Create a blog post at the end of the day where each student shares or writes one great moment from the day. Or if blogging isn't your thing, create a handout for each day's beautiful moments and place it in a binder that your class can add to. By the end of the school year, your class will have thousands of small beautiful moments that they can read through and enjoy.

Share a Note: One teacher we know writes tiny notes or draws simple images on Post-Its a few times a week, filled with specific praise and gratitude for the student. He might write, "I love how you helped Aidan at center time today" or "Your comment about the scientific method today was so smart and thoughtful!" He shares these "messages of love" at random points throughout the day and asks students to share the note with friends, parents, or other caregivers.



Julie Causton, Ph.D., is the co-author of the bestselling *Inclusive School Practices* series and co-presenter of the online course *The Inspired Educator: 21 Days to Happier and More Engaged Learners (and Teachers)* with Kate MacLeod.



A licensed New York State child psychologist, **ALICE STERLING HONIG** has spent more than 40 years counseling families and teaching courses on child development. Here, she shares her thoughts on how to build empathy at a young age and protect older children's hearts in the age of cyberbullying:



Alice Sterling Honig, Ph.D., is the author of *Little Kids, Big Worries: Stress-Busting Tips for Early Childhood Classrooms*

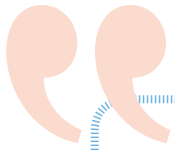


Bullying and cyberbullying are endemic and enormous problems now in schools. There are no quick fixes; the answers are complex and require complete parent/teacher cooperation. Families and teachers have to start very early to **encourage empathy** and show children how to help a person who is in trouble or feels hurt, scared, or worried. Adults at school and home need to **model kindness and reassurance** by reaching out to those who have been hurt by others. They need to learn how to handle their own anger and indignation so they don't vent insults, sarcasm, and put-downs that children so easily copycat.

Bibliotherapy with young children helps. Teachers should read lots of prosocial books with children, such as *Horton Hears a Who* and *The Little Engine That Could*. Books like these show how kindness helps heal awful feelings when kids have been hurt by others.

Teachers should also encourage families to **monitor their child's texting** to make sure they aren't sending bullying and hurtful words. If their children hurt others, encourage them to respond not with strong yelling and punishment, but with a discussion of how it feels to be hurt by bullying.





Teachers should engage in active listening with their students, provide supportive assistance, and teach their students **stress-reducing strategies**. I have three favorites for stress reduction:

1. When the students are going to take a test or do a difficult assignment, I have them close their eyes for 45 seconds and think of something that makes them happy. This relaxes so many students.
2. I take a beach ball and write on it about 25 stress-reducing activities—like plaster a smile on your face, say three things that make you happy, take five deep breaths, blow a bubble, squeeze your hands as tight as you can and then let go. Then I throw the ball around, and when a student catches it, they do the activity located wherever their left thumb landed.
3. I give each student three index cards and a brown paper bag. I have them write down their worries or something that is bothering them. They put the cards in their bag, and I take the wastebasket around and have them throw the bag away—“throwing all your worries behind.”

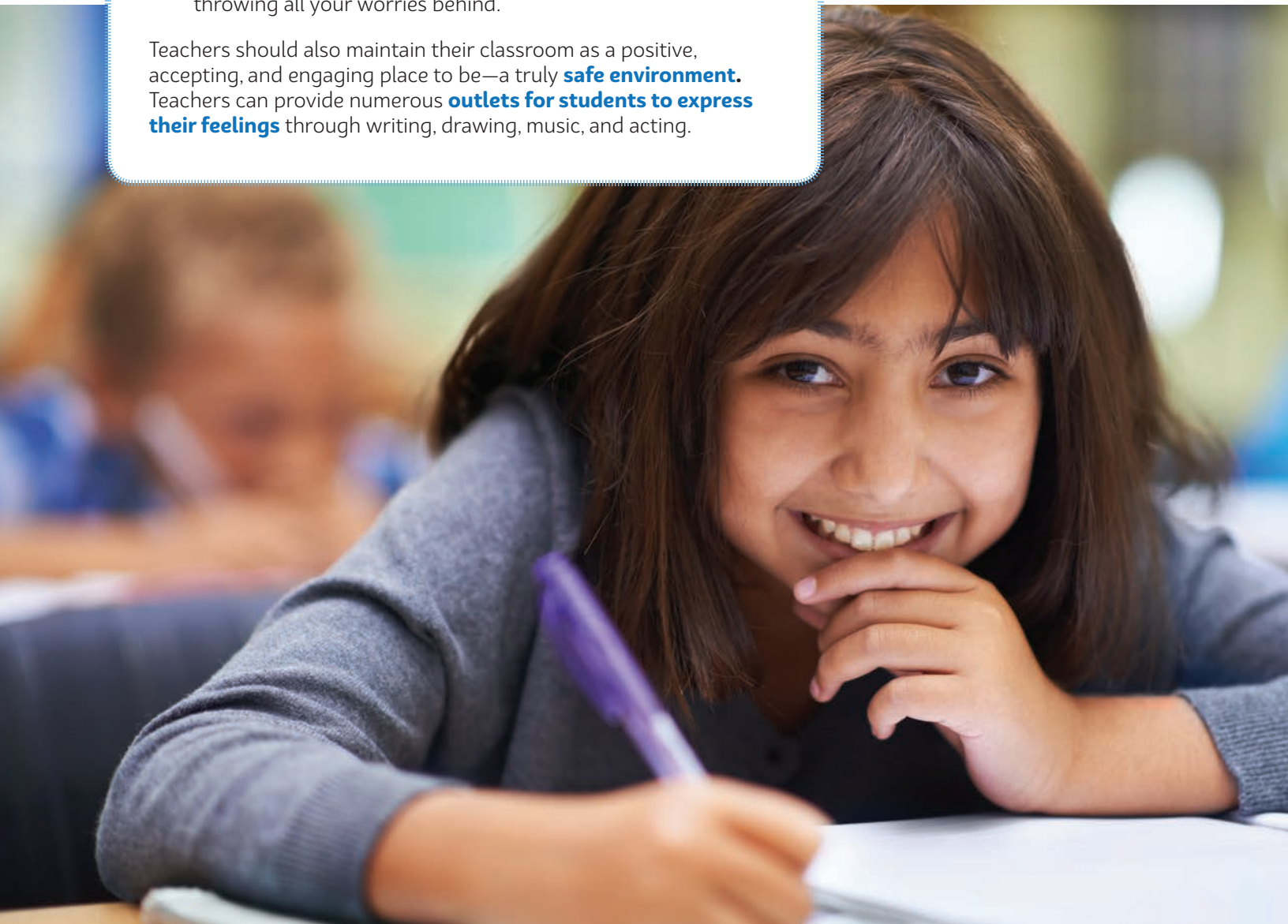
Teachers should also maintain their classroom as a positive, accepting, and engaging place to be—a truly **safe environment**. Teachers can provide numerous **outlets for students to express their feelings** through writing, drawing, music, and acting.



BEVERLEY JOHNS has four decades of experience working with students with learning disabilities and/or emotional and behavior disorders in public schools. Here are some of her favorite stress-busters to use in the classroom.



Beverley Johns, M.S., is the author of *Your Classroom Guide to Special Education Law*.





Visit the Blog for More

For more ways to support students' social-emotional skills, visit the Brookses Inclusion Lab blog and click the "Social-Emotional Development" tab for the latest posts.



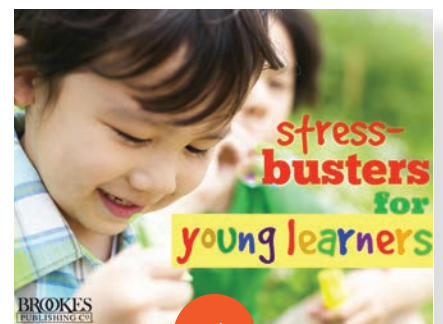
19 Tips on Supporting Positive Behavior & Social Skills



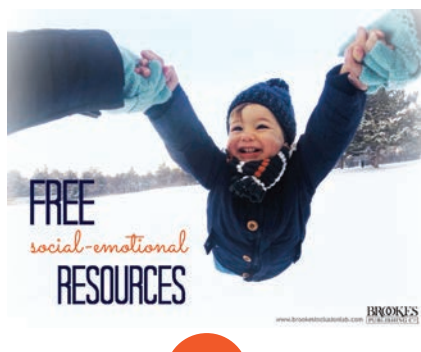
5 Activities for Building Empathy in Your Students



6 Ways to Boost Students' Social Skills



9 Stress-Reducing Strategies for Young Learners



TEACHER SELF-CARE STRATEGIES

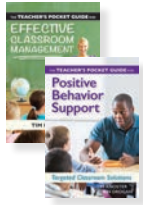


We asked our experts:

What are some practical ways that teachers can practice self-care in times of increased stress and uncertainty? How can they keep themselves from burning out so they can continue teaching and supporting students effectively?

Read on for their answers!

Great things happen when you're proactive about positivity. **TIM KNOSTER** offers some specific suggestions for increasing positivity in the classroom—which will in turn make teachers feel more positive about themselves and their work:

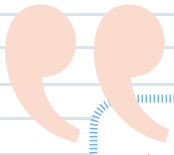


Tim Knoster, Ed.D., is the author of *The Teacher's Pocket Guide for Effective Classroom Management, Second Edition*, and co-author of *The Teacher's Pocket Guide for Positive Behavior Support*

Generally speaking, the more we are **proactive about providing positive acknowledgement** to students, the more successful we as individual teachers will likely feel. Start small by trying to periodically self-monitor your distribution of praise statements for desired behavior on a schedule. Try to **slowly increase your positive acknowledgments** by one or two a day and/or class period.

Also, keep in mind that the journey of a thousand miles starts with the first couple steps. In tandem with this approach, attend to your own personal wellness and build in wellness activities in to your classroom for your kids and you (e.g. brain breaks).





It is getting more difficult to find educators who stay in the field for 30 or more years. Even though it's extremely rewarding, teaching can be difficult. Newbies going into the field, fresh out of college, typically have grandiose expectations of creating bulletin boards, having wonderfully behaved classrooms filled with wide-eyed children and laughter. They generally forget about lack of funds for classroom supplies, late nights grading papers, challenging behaviors in the classroom and parents who can be less than supportive.

It's important to teach our new teachers to care for themselves. There is a wonderful saying that **“you can't serve water from a vessel that is empty.”** It's important for teachers to constantly renew themselves both physically and emotionally.

Take time to enjoy the children. You are there to make a lasting impression and they will remember you for the way you care for them, not the way you scored their paper.

Set limits. It's easy to overextend: volunteering to be on every committee, staying after school five days a week, and spending the weekend getting ready for the following week. Set limits with both time and money—do not spend your entire paycheck purchasing everything in the teacher catalog.

Spend time during the summer and on breaks actually taking a break. Do not fill up your time with all things school. Take time to be with your family, take a vacation and take time to refill your vessel.



In her 30+ years working with students with disabilities, **CINDY GOLDEN** has been an educator, an autism consultant, a school psychologist, and director of a program serving students with severe emotional and behavioral needs. She shares some suggestions—and a gentle warning or two—based on her decades of experience in psychology and education.



Cindy Golden, Ed.D., is the author of *The Special Educator's Toolkit* and the upcoming book *The Data Collection Toolkit*.

While some might recommend meditation as a teacher stress-buster, author **ONDINE GROSS** recommends *mediation* as a way to renew positive relationships in schools and restore a teacher's joy in his or her profession:



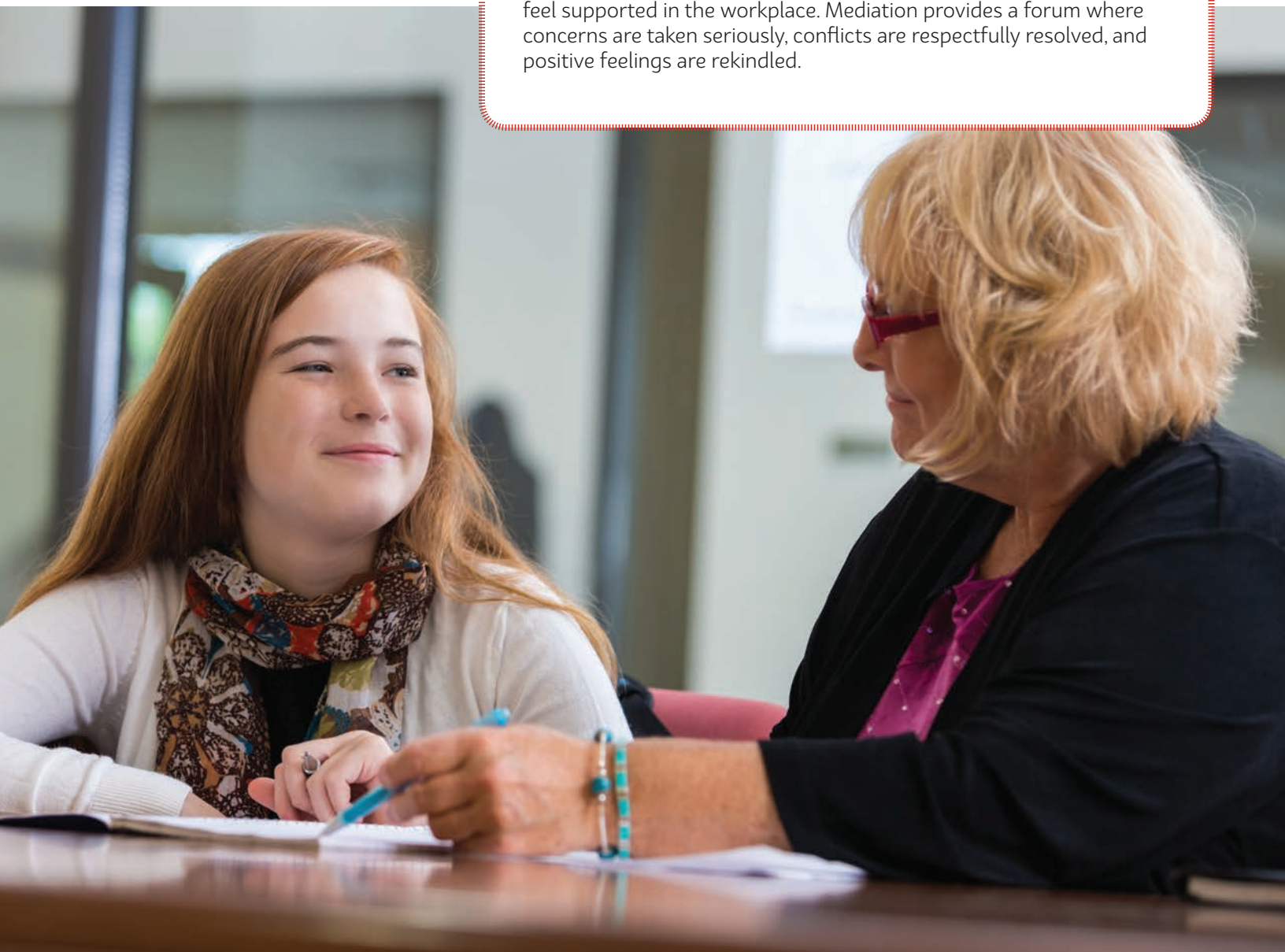
Ondine Gross is the author of *Restore the Respect: How to Mediate School Conflicts and Keep Students Learning*



One of the biggest stressors a teacher may experience in the school workplace is unresolved conflict with a student, fellow staff member, or parent/guardian. Such conflicts can fester for long periods of time, cause burnout, and sap the joy from teaching.

One self-care technique is to seek a safe way to **resolve conflicts using mediation**—a restorative practice that treats participants with equal dignity and respect. Led by a trained and impartial mediator, meetings are voluntary, safe, and confidential. Each party expresses their view, is heard nonjudgmentally, and listens to the other person's perspective. Once greater understanding is obtained, the two parties develop their plans to move forward.

When they try mediation, **participants are often surprised to find that the original source of the conflict was smaller than they thought** or that their assumptions were incorrect. If mistakes were made, each party has a way to express regret and make amends. Teachers support students more effectively when they themselves feel supported in the workplace. Mediation provides a forum where concerns are taken seriously, conflicts are respectfully resolved, and positive feelings are rekindled.





I encourage teachers to **connect and collaborate with their colleagues** throughout the school year. Teachers have so many ways these days to seek the advice of others who may have had similar experiences or can offer an insightful solution. In addition, teachers can find resources, learn new tips, and up-to-date teaching strategies.

In particular, I recommend that teachers look to the numerous **online interest and support groups** available to teachers such as Twitter (like @Inclusive_Class) and Facebook. There are all kinds of free group chats and idea exchanges with educators and notable education experts online such as #spedchat and #edchat (Twitter). Check them out and join in on the conversation!

NICOLE EREDICS, blogger at The Inclusive Class, emphasizes the value of reaching out to colleagues—in person and online—and trading ideas on how to decompress and solve tough issues in the classroom.



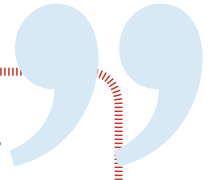
Nicole Eredics is a blogger at The Inclusive Class and the author of an upcoming Brookes book on inclusive education. Stay tuned to www.brookespublishing.com for details!



Psychologist **ALICE STERLING HONIG** has years of experience working with adults who feel burned-out, exhausted, and frustrated. Here, she offers some fun and restorative suggestions for treating yourself with compassion during your new school year:



Alice Sterling Honig, Ph.D., is the author of *Little Kids, Big Worries: Stress-Busting Tips for Early Childhood Classrooms*



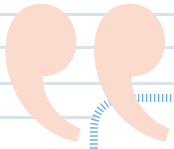
To help ourselves as teachers, we need to find activities that can **calm and nurture our bodies and souls**. You might try these suggestions:

- Take a bubble bath
- Learn a new skill
- Knit blankets for hospitalized babies
- Play a guitar or other instrument and sing out your woes
- Try snowboarding or another vigorous activity
- Find a friend who can provide a sympathetic ear
- Rediscover the joys of nature through gardening, walking in the woods, or hiking
- Write a poem or a journal entry to get your feelings out

All of these ideas can help. And during these activities, think more deeply about how to handle feelings of anger or exhaustion so you do **treat yourself as a precious person**. Remind yourself you do the best you can, as insightfully and compassionately as you can.

For more self-care suggestions, see this Brookes Inclusion Lab blog post and infographic based on Dr. Honig's book: <http://bit.ly/14TipsStress>





Teachers need positive outlets for their own emotions like exercise, music, rewarding themselves with things they love to do, eating healthy, and finding support groups. One great way to get recharged is by **reaching out to other fellow educators at conferences**. Here are some tips:

- Introduce yourself to peers at lunch, during morning or afternoon breaks, or at the evening social event
- Sit by someone you don't know at a session. Share what you do and talk about your common needs.
- Exchange emails and write supportive messages back and forth.
- Go up and introduce yourself to speakers after sessions you enjoyed. Ask a question that's on your mind—many speakers are delighted to answer questions.
- Attend meet and greets or table talks where you can listen to a speaker at a small table and get to know fellow participants.
- Go to poster sessions—they're wonderful opportunities to talk to a speaker who can give you support or answer a burning question.

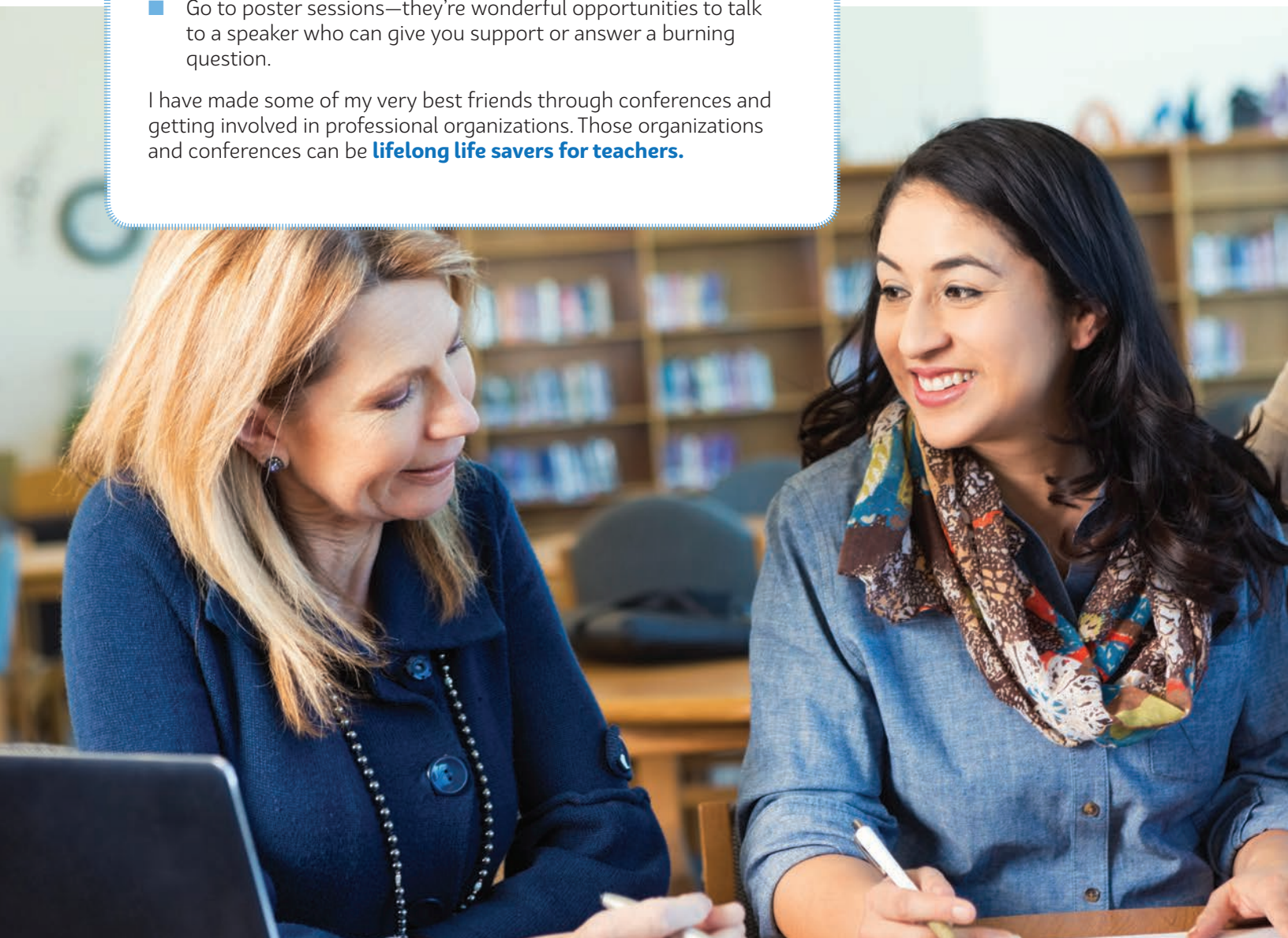
I have made some of my very best friends through conferences and getting involved in professional organizations. Those organizations and conferences can be **lifelong life savers for teachers**.



Sometimes when we're stressed, reaching out to a peer who understands is the best medicine. **BEVERLEY JOHNS** offers some specific suggestions for connecting with colleagues who can help you recharge and brainstorm solutions with you.



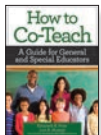
Beverley Johns, M.S., is the author of *Your Classroom Guide to Special Education Law*.



ELIZABETH POTTS, a co-teaching expert and special education program director, highlights the importance of valuing yourself—and rejuvenating your passion with a periodic influx of fresh challenges:

The cliché answer is to **take care of yourself, and that’s a cliché for a reason**: if you don’t take care of yourself, you don’t have the stamina to give what students, parents, and administrators need from you at work. In addition to remembering to value yourself and your mental and physical health, it is important to seek **professional development** that will invigorate your teaching and provide you with new ideas or challenges.

Taking on **new challenges**, like a new curriculum, or grade level, or a new instructional method, will help keep you fresh and excited. If you are changing things up, it’s harder to get burned out, and your stress is lower because you are exerting some element of control over your professional life. It can be as simple as **choosing a different book** for a book study, or seeking ways to integrate a **new-to-you technology** like Twitter, or seeking ways to **bring experts in your subject into your room** via Skype.



Elizabeth Potts, Ph.D., is the co-author of *How to Co-Teach*.



Do a happiness reflection. Set your phone timer for five minutes and write what comes to mind for each of these prompts:

- When was the last time I really laughed?
- Where do I feel deprived?
- What do I need more of to be happier? What do I need less of?
- What does happiness look like/feel like/ taste like/smell like to me?
- Am I optimistic or pessimistic most of the time?
- To increase my own happiness I really need _____.
- What am I starving for?
- What is causing me to feel resentful and why?

Next, read your responses. If most of your answers were about taking a vacation, but packing your bags to head to the Maldives is not in the cards, can you start to plan a trip that works for your schedule and finances? Can you take a Saturday just for yourself? Can you close your door during your next prep period and have a Diet Coke? Ask yourself how you can purposely design these things into your life to set yourself as a priority.

Cultivate happiness. To begin cultivating more happiness and self-care, create a list of what you need more of (laughter, sleep, dance, music, support, humor, meditation, reading for pleasure, etc.).

Now, prioritize you. Select at least one of the things from the list you created and make a plan of action. How can you systematically put more of what you need into your life? How can you move towards feelings of balance, support, and happiness?

Celebrate the small stuff. We've found that we have more fun when we celebrate even little things. (You woke up! Got the kids off to school!) Find a way to celebrate those acts.

Share the love. When you greet colleagues in the halls, consider what you can do or say to share joy. Can you find small ways to celebrate others? One teacher we know bought a bag of Kudos bars and attached personalized notes to them for each of her colleagues, thanking them for all they do. Those notes brightened the day for her colleagues, and for her.



Inclusion experts and popular presenters **JULIE CAUSTON** and **KATE MACLEOD** suggest the following self-care activities to boost your happiness and meet your own needs.

Julie and Kate have an online course called *The Inspired Educator: 21 Days to Happier and More Engaged Learners (and Teachers)*. Sign up to discover more practices that bolster your students' energy, engagement, and well-being, as well as your own: <http://bit.ly/InspiredEdClass>



Julie Causton is the co-author of the bestselling *Inclusive School Practices* series.



We hope this booklet gave you some practical inspiration for supporting your students and taking care of you!



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