



"It took support of many in the Flagstaff community to instill confidence in my abilities as a teacher." Kayley Quick, Flagstaff High School, in front of a recently installed mural on her campus, discusses issues of self-confidence during remote teaching. Photo by Stephen Toya, courtesy of Northern Arizona University.

Be Kind to Yourself

Pam Stephens

During the time of remote teaching brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, art educators willingly took action to provide exceptional learning experiences for their K–12 and post-secondary students. In a completely unplanned teaching and learning environment, art teachers quickly switched from traditional face-to-face classroom instruction to unfamiliar remote educational practices. This abrupt pedagogical shift brought with it a variety of struggles.

The Missing Disposition

Navigating mostly untested waters, art educators around the world nonetheless demonstrated professional attitudes and held to their values and beliefs. Dispositions such as innovation, intentionalism, flexibility, resilience, adaptability, empathy, leadership, and respectfulness readily

describe art teacher responses to this unprecedented educational challenge. Yet, one extremely important disposition seems to have been missed by

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many. That disposition is kindness—not kindness to others, but kindness to self!

Self-Compassion

Being kind to oneself is sometimes referred to as self-compassion; being empathetic to one's personal circumstances, needs, and abilities. Practic-

ing kindness to oneself is sometimes not as easy as it sounds.

For example, during the time of remote instruction, did you intentionally (or unintentionally) hold yourself to impossibly high standards? Did you compare yourself to others? Did you have instances of feeling as if your instruction came up short? These kinds of thoughts are the opposite of self-compassion. You certainly wouldn't tell your students that they don't measure up to crushingly difficult criteria. You wouldn't compare one student to another, nor would you inform them that their work just isn't good enough. We know these kinds of comments can have a negative effect on students. Why, then, is it okay to impose such negativity on oneself? The answer is simple: It's not!

You Are Enough

Honor yourself. Consider how you can flip those negative thoughts into something positive. Be tolerant of your perceived inadequacies. Give yourself time to breathe and reflect. Recognize that we all have shortcomings. Yes, even that teacher to whom you so unjustly compared yourself has limitations and imperfections.

Be mindful of what it means to be a teacher: You adapt, you are patient and caring, and most importantly, you help children make sense of the world. Do the same for yourself.

Come to grips with the fact that we are teaching during an unparalleled and ever-changing worldwide crisis. Without the benefit of training or preparation, educators around the world (including you) accepted the difficult task of immediately switching from one teaching modality to another. Remind yourself that you did this. You continued to teach. You brought honor to your profession, your students, and your colleagues.

You were and are enough. Be kind to yourself. 🧘

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