

# Wellness and Resilience Strategies: Mind

## Section 8



***Our fatigue is often caused not by work, but by worry, frustration, and resentment."***

— Dale Carnegie

***"The calm and balanced mind is the strong and great mind; the hurried and agitated mind is the weak one."*** — Wallace D. Wattles

The four sectors of the compass model -Mind, Spirit, Strength and Heart- not only contribute to our overall wellness, but also provide guidance on strategies to help build our compassion resilience. Before delving in further, you may want to take a self-assessment of your current wellness practices (found in information document). Hold onto this and notice if any that you marked as "this never occurred to me" change as you encounter the next four sections of the toolkit.

Mind is the first sector we will explore. Being resilient in this area is exemplified by being well-organized, engaging in meaningful work, and being fully present in the moment. Mindfulness is a contemplative practice of being intentionally aware in the present moment. Mindfulness will be a key skill used in many of the Mind Section activities as well as those that follow (Spirit, Strength, and Heart).



[The practice of mindfulness is displayed in this brief, animated video.](#) In short, mindfulness involves focusing our attention on the present and noticing our thoughts and feelings with an attitude of acceptance (Davidson, 2012). The goal of mindfulness is to be fully present with our emotions (HEART), with others (HEART), with our bodies (STRENGTH), with our environment (MIND), and with the universe (SPIRIT) (Davidson, 2012); therefore, mindfulness is a key skill that will form a foundation for building our compassion resilience in all four sectors of the wellness compass. It is through being fully present and aware and observing one-mindfully that we can participate most effectively in building our own resilience and wellness. A lot of mindfulness practices involve using an anchor, such as breathing, as a way to turn attention back to the present moment. In this [4-minute video children show](#) how mindfulness can be a helpful strategy for both adults and children.

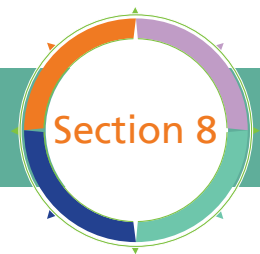
Mindfulness is not only a mechanism to sharpen our attention, but is also a means of strengthening our compassion and empathy. Specifically, mindfulness is associated with increased self-compassion, higher compassion resilience, and lower compassion fatigue (Thielman & Cacciatore, 2014).

Because mindfulness is so intimately connected to compassion resilience and the strategies that follow, you may find it useful to [assess how mindful you are](#); perhaps see where you are at now, then take the survey again after completing the strategy sections of the toolkit.

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## How the practice of mindfulness can help build resilience in the Mind area of the wellness compass:

This area of wellness has to do with how we manage our time, work space, and belongings. Let's pretend that Mary, a zealot in her first year of teaching who volunteers at every opportunity, is starting to feel overcommitted and over-scheduled. One week Mary double-books herself, is late to a meeting, and begins to feel strapped for time to dedicate to her lesson planning. Mary, ever attentive of when her life feels out of balance, notices how her penchant to say "yes" to everything has made it such that she cannot give her all to the things she has agreed to do. Rather than engage in self-blame (a form of judgment), Mary accepts that she cannot reasonably (and with compassion) do everything asked of her. She identifies the areas of her job where she has the freedom to say "no" and she vows to only say "yes" to opportunities that most reflect her interests and values.

Learning to say "no" compassionately (see compassionate boundary section) especially in a profession or work culture where we might be expected to say "yes" (see expectations section), is imperative to maintaining resilience in this sector of the compass.

If you struggle with taking on too much, you may benefit from [learning more](#) about the benefits of saying "no" and how to do so compassionately.

To learn more about how to "organize your brain, your time, your workspace, and your projects", check out the [following blog](#).



The mind area of the wellness compass also suggests that we have a strong need to do meaningful work that engages our individual gifts and skills. In "Mindsets," Dr. Carol Dweck (2016) shows that it is not just our abilities and talents that bring us success as teachers, but whether we approach our work with a fixed or growth mindset. People with fixed mindsets believe qualities are etched in stone and that abilities are fixed. This mindset often leads to people feeling deficient or incompetent when faced with difficult situations. When we feel a lack of competence, we may retreat from the challenge before us and become judgmental. For example, in a fixed mindset, if we are challenged by the complex needs of a student in our classroom that we do not feel competent to address, we may retreat from engagement with that child. In the process, we might blame ourselves and/or the student (see expectations section). Thus, our lack of a sense of competence can leave us in a place of compassion fatigue for that student.

In contrast, people with a growth mindset believe that abilities can be developed through practice and effort. Our skills and talents are not predetermined; therefore, people with growth mindsets stretch themselves to learn new things and believe themselves capable of learning through experience. These people are more resilient in the face of setbacks. In a growth mindset, if we experience compassion fatigue, we may view it as an opportunity to grow our compassion resilience!

Finding a level of competence in the face of complex challenges is tough! We benefit from understanding our own growth potential; but, we also benefit from understanding the resilience and strengths of those we serve and those with whom we work. None of us are the sole source of connection, support, or learning for a student, parent, or colleague. And, all students, families, and colleagues have internal strengths that can be accessed to move them closer to the lives they desire. Many of the activities in this section invite us to recognize our own strengths and competencies and to celebrate the skills and strengths of those with whom we work.



## The Compass Wellness Practices Assessment

*"Self-care is not an indulgence. Self-care is a discipline. It requires tough-mindedness, a deep and personal understanding of your priorities, and a respect for both yourself and the people you choose to spend your life with."* — Tami Forman

The following worksheet for assessing wellness practices is not exhaustive, merely suggestive. Feel free to add areas of self-care that are relevant for you and rate yourself on how often and how well you are taking care of yourself these days. When you are finished, look for patterns in your responses. Are you more active in some areas of self-care but ignore others? Are there items on the list that make you think, "I would never do that"? Listen to your inner responses, your internal dialogue about self-care and making yourself a priority. Take particular note of anything you would like to include more in your life.




Rate the following areas according to how well you think you are doing:

3 = I do this well (e.g., frequently)	0 = I never do this
2 = I do this OK (e.g., occasionally)	? = This never occurred to me. I might be interested
1 = I barely or rarely do this	N/A = doesn't apply or it's not of interest to me

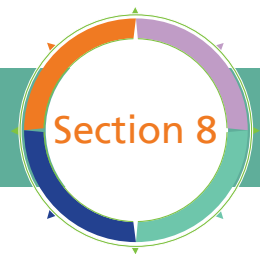
	<b>Relationships</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Practice self-compassion <input type="checkbox"/> Spend time with others whose company I enjoy <input type="checkbox"/> If relevant, schedule regular dates with my partner or spouse <input type="checkbox"/> If relevant, schedule regular activities with my children <input type="checkbox"/> Stay in contact with important people in my life <input type="checkbox"/> If relevant, spend time with my companion animals <input type="checkbox"/> Make time to reply to personal emails/letters; send holiday cards <input type="checkbox"/> Allow others to do things for me <input type="checkbox"/> Enlarge my social circle <input type="checkbox"/> Ask for help when I need it <input type="checkbox"/> Share a fear, hope, or secret with someone I trust <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
	<b>Emotions</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Give myself affirmations, praise myself <input type="checkbox"/> Love myself <input type="checkbox"/> Practice being present <input type="checkbox"/> Re-read favorite books, re-view favorite movies <input type="checkbox"/> Seek out comforting activities, objects, people, and places <input type="checkbox"/> Allow myself to cry <input type="checkbox"/> Find things that make me laugh <input type="checkbox"/> Notice my inner experience – listen to my thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, feelings <input type="checkbox"/> Express my outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches, protests <input type="checkbox"/> Use emotional regulation strategies <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	


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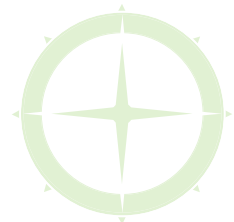
## Section 8

 <b>SPIRIT</b>	<b>Core Values</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify what is meaningful and notice its place in my life <input type="checkbox"/> Find a connection/community that shares my values <input type="checkbox"/> Have experiences of awe <input type="checkbox"/> Contribute to causes in which I believe <input type="checkbox"/> Read inspirational books or listen to inspirational talks/music <input type="checkbox"/> Cherish my optimism and hope <input type="checkbox"/> Be open to inspiration <input type="checkbox"/> Be aware of non-material aspects of life <input type="checkbox"/> Be open to not knowing <input type="checkbox"/> Be curious <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
	<b>Rest &amp; Play</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Strive for balance within my work and non-work life <input type="checkbox"/> Make time for reflection <input type="checkbox"/> Spend time in nature <input type="checkbox"/> Sing <input type="checkbox"/> Meditate <input type="checkbox"/> Dance, swim, walk/run, play sports, or other physical activities <input type="checkbox"/> Take vacations <input type="checkbox"/> Take day trips or mini-vacations <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
 <b>STRENGTH</b>	<b>Stress Resilience</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Make time away from telephones, email, and the Internet <input type="checkbox"/> Make time for self-reflection <input type="checkbox"/> Have my own personal therapy <input type="checkbox"/> Write in a journal <input type="checkbox"/> Read about things that are unrelated to work <input type="checkbox"/> Do something at which I am not expert or in charge <input type="checkbox"/> Attend to minimizing stress in my life <input type="checkbox"/> Learn something new <input type="checkbox"/> Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
	<b>Care for Body</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch, and dinner) <input type="checkbox"/> Eat healthily <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise <input type="checkbox"/> Get regular medical care for prevention <input type="checkbox"/> Get medical care when needed <input type="checkbox"/> Take time off when sick <input type="checkbox"/> Get massages (professional or other) <input type="checkbox"/> If relevant, take time to be sexual - with myself, with a partner <input type="checkbox"/> Get enough sleep <input type="checkbox"/> Wear clothes I like <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	

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<div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">MIND</div> 	<b>School/Work</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Take a break during the workday (e.g., lunch) <input type="checkbox"/> Have intentional conversations with co-workers <input type="checkbox"/> Make quiet time to complete tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding <input type="checkbox"/> Set limits/boundaries with students and colleagues <input type="checkbox"/> Balance work so that no one day or part of a day is "too much" <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange work space so it is comfortable and comforting <input type="checkbox"/> Get regular supervision or consultation <input type="checkbox"/> Negotiate for my needs <input type="checkbox"/> Have a peer support group <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
	<b>Organization</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Make a budget for how I plan to spend and save money <input type="checkbox"/> Keep track of how I spend my money <input type="checkbox"/> Use a calendar to plan my day, week, month, year <input type="checkbox"/> Prioritize how I spend my time <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange my living space so it is comfortable and comforting <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplish the tasks I plan to for myself each day <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
		<b>Overall Balance</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Strive for balance among work, family, relationships, play, and rest



Adapted from Saakvitne, Pearlman, & Staff of TSI/CAAP (1996). *Transforming the pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatization*. Norton.  
 The compass model is adapted from the work of [The Samaritan Family Wellness Foundation](#).



## Wellness and Resilience Strategies - Spirit