



# Teachers, Cut Yourself Some Slack!

*by Pamela Langille, Executive Staff Officer, Professional Learning*

Strategies for coping with all of the intersecting pressures and stressors that teachers are experiencing are essential, but often difficult to see and do amidst the fog of being overwhelmed and exhausted. Unfortunately, there are many elements in our lives right now that are outside of our control and it is hard to see the end of the road to this pandemic. But there will be an end! This is a long and difficult pandemic, but it is a temporary period of time in our lives and careers. How you live and teach during this pandemic is not the “new normal.” I would argue that this phrase is not helpful and actually elicits feelings of hopelessness and despair, as it suggests there is no end in sight. I have heard many stories of

teachers trying to take all of the typical ways they teach and try and adapt it to being pandemic-friendly. This is not a realistic expectation from others or yourself. You are living and teaching in a state of emergency and eventually, the emergency will end. In a state of emergency, you operate by prioritizing because it's understood that everything cannot be done. Cut yourself some slack, prioritize and set boundaries, and focus on what you can do. Everyone only has so much to give without receiving. Most of us are familiar with Carol McCloud's children's book, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* It's more important than ever that you practice self-care and fill your own bucket every day. I appreciate this sounds daunting

and to many, it feels like just one more thing we don't have time for; however, without practicing self-care, the body has a magnificent way of forcing you to take the time and it doesn't send you a calendar invite for when it's convenient for you. Self-care doesn't require a big plan or an overhaul of your life and habits; it can look like a lot of things and can be as small of a change as carving out ten minutes a day for you to do something that you enjoy. I offer the following self-care activities and practices below in hopes that there is something that appeals to you and prompts you to act today and respond to your self-care needs.

- Virtual coffee/beverage date with a friend
- Listen to music that you find rejuvenating and sing along loud and proud
- Indulge by going to a full-service gas station and relishing those extra few minutes while being waited on
- Go for a walk in the rain
- Tell your pet your darkest thoughts today and notice their reaction – it will be okay!
- Bake or cook something special
- Do a puzzle, colour, or take up another hobby
- Pick or buy fresh flowers
- Write in a journal (e.g. What are you proud of? What advice would you give a friend in the same situation?)
- Go to a virtual museum
- Go for a drive
- Pet your dog or cat/get a pet if you can take on that commitment at this time
- Cuddle up with a loved one (in your social bubble of course 😊)
- Set screen time limits
- Take a nap
- Laugh – Read a joke book or do something you know will make you laugh
- Order in dinner for the night/subscribe to a meal kit delivery service for a week or longer
- Go outside at night and star gaze, and why not wish upon a star while you are at it
- Edit who you follow on social media – if they don't bring you joy, they've got to go!