

Managing Teacher Emotions and Stress

OSU Motivation in Classrooms Lab – Motivation Minute. November 2021

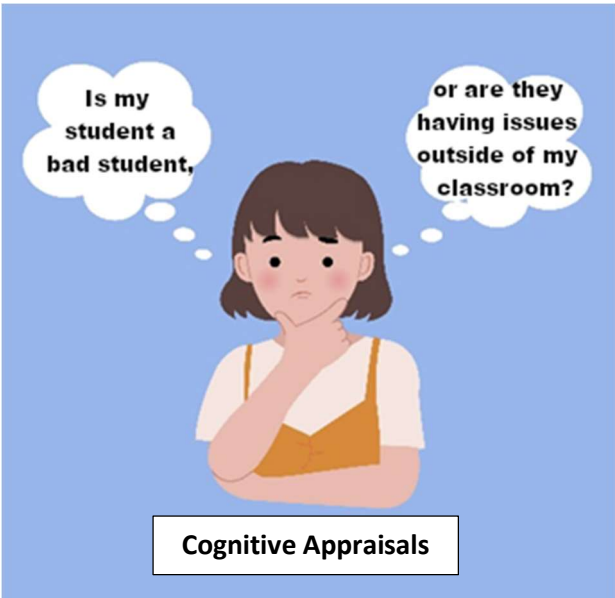
How can I regulate my emotions?

Teachers in K-12 schools experience high levels of emotional exhaustion. In recognition of teacher stress, we discuss strategies for teachers to regulate their emotions and reduce stress.

Emotion Regulation- There are three commonly used forms of emotion regulation: suppression, masking, and cognitive appraisals.

- *Suppression* occurs when teachers try to ignore or neglect their negative emotions.
- *Masking* occurs when teachers hide negative emotions and display what appear to be positive emotions, such as smiling, saying that nothing is wrong, or pretending to be happy.
- *Cognitive appraisals* or *re-appraisals* occur when teachers employ strategies to shift their own perspectives and see situations from a different viewpoint, such as the child's perspective.

Unlike suppression and masking, cognitive appraisals are a healthy way to manage stressful situations and prevent emotional exhaustion and burnout.



Applying emotion regulation to the classroom: We recommend the use of cognitive appraisals when classroom incidents or stressful situations arise. Cognitive appraisals promote the well-being and resilience of both teachers and students.

Example Situation	Suppression/Masking	Cognitive Appraisal/Re-Appraisal
A student in my class has been very uncooperative lately. The child refuses to do their work correctly and will not follow instructions when I encourage them to complete assignments.	I just try to hide my anger by simply smiling and staying focused on the lesson plan, despite the poor behavior.	Even though I am angry, I try to take the child's perspective and ask myself: "does the child value the activity? What is the student interested in?"
There is a defiant student in my class that refuses to follow classroom rules and constantly throws temper tantrums.	I do my best to pretend to be happy even though the child is irritating me.	Even though I am irritated, I try to think about the student's life, and I ask myself: "are the student's needs being met? Is the child having problems at home?"
I used to work all the time (including weekends) because I wanted everything to be perfect. I realize now that I need to disconnect from work sometimes for the sake of my mental health and my relationship with my family.	I typically keep all my emotions inside, because I do not want to place additional stress on my students.	I have become so exhausted that I think it may be time to evaluate whether I can really handle everything that is on my plate. I plan to speak to my administrator about strategies for better managing my workload.

Coping Strategies for Stress Reduction:

- Avoid self-blame which may lead to depression and anxiety.
- Be aware of your own stress level and recognize your own compassion fatigue when caring too much for students.
- Employ cognitive reappraisals to emotion-elicited events and [practice mindfulness strategies](#) or [meditation](#) for emotion regulation.
- Seek administrative support and voice your needs to the administrative team. Take breaks when you need it. A positive environment is key to your well-being, and to cultivate the social and emotional learning for your classroom.

References:

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