

**M6-S8: “How Are You, Really?”**

GK	Hi, Christina and hello, listeners! Welcome to your eighth and final session in Module 6 of the TALE Academy. Today, we’re going to talk about you, the educator, and your mental health and well-being. Let’s start with you, Christina.
CLH	<p>On the drive to school I feel it - my heart starts racing and I’m feeling on edge. It’s Monday morning. My lesson plans for the week are merely outlines, unlike the masterpieces I used to write when I was single. But I know I can get through today and fill in the details on my plans for the rest of the week...Oh! Wait!</p> <p>There’s a faculty meeting after school today! I’ll lose some time there. I hope none of my colleagues called out today. The last thing I need is to be asked to cover a class during my prep period. When will I find the time I need? I have to get my son to karate tonight. What will we have for dinner? How will my students behave today? Mondays are so unpredictable and I’m already overwhelmed. My thoughts are spinning out of control.</p> <p>Before going to my classroom, I stop by the school office to check my mailbox.</p> <p>“Good morning! How are you?” asks my colleague.</p> <p>I muster a socially appropriate smile and reply, “I’m good; how are you?”</p> <p>My colleague must have seen through my response. “But how are you, <b>really?</b>”</p>
GK	<p>The name of this session is “How are You, Really?”. So why should we care about social emotional skills for educators?</p> <p>Because taking care of yourself is taking care of your students.</p>
CLH	And the rate of teacher burnout, frustration, and compassion fatigue is alarming. Teachers are more likely than the general population to report experiencing frequent job-related stress and symptoms of depression, according to a 2021 State of the U.S. Teacher Survey. It’s not surprising that a 2021 survey found that one in four teachers considered leaving their job by the end of the 2020-2021 year. Black teachers were more likely to plan to leave the profession.
GK	We need to invest time and resources in teacher well-being because it impacts our students, as well. There is substantial evidence indicating that to take care of teachers is to take care of students and support their learning. Adult well-being has an effect on students’ well-being, their motivation to learn, overall school climate, and student academic performance.
CLH	How do we teach our children self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building, and responsible decision-making – the competencies in the

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	<p>CASEL 5 – when we ourselves are struggling to invest time and energy in our own social and emotional well-being?</p> <p>Let’s meet Jennifer Heaphy, a second-grade teacher from upstate New York, in the profession for thirty years. When the children returned to in-person learning from COVID-19, they had to be retaught everything - from sitting in their seats to active listening to learning how to take turns. She was exhausted.</p>
GK	<p>So many teachers across New York can identify with the sentiment of being too exhausted helping students recover from the challenges of the pandemic to help themselves.</p> <p>But wouldn’t the reverse of that statement be true? Jennifer Heaphy asks</p> <p>“If I help myself and reinvest in my own social and emotional health, am I not helping my students recover?” What do you think, Christina?</p>
CLH	<p>I’d have to go with a resounding yes. As educators, we can’t guide our students if we don’t take care of our own basic needs. And there’s a bonus. Taking care of our own health as educators presents an opportunity to show our students what managing emotions, setting personal goals, and investing in healthy relationships look like in difficult circumstances.</p>
GK	<p>Let’s return to the CASEL 5 SEL competencies that we want our students to acquire and consider how we can practice those same skills for our own wellness in ways that—like you said. Christina—model social emotional health for your students.</p> <p>First, Social Awareness and Relationship Skills. What does that look like for us?</p> <p>Teacher wellness behaviors in these areas include: collaborating with colleagues in different variations, such as professional learning communities, or PLCs, informal team-building, thought partners, peer reviews, and community-building circles. You can also use connection-building exercises that deepen professional relationships. And you can express gratitude to your colleagues as often as you can.</p> <p>A way to model this for students is to show students how to work together when there is a problem to solve by sharing the details of select peer collaborations, such as a PLC or a thought partner exchange. You can be specific about how you listened to others’ perspectives, demonstrated empathy, resolved conflicts, and communicated effectively. Not only will you feel good investing in and celebrating your professional relationships, your students will benefit from observing your social skills.</p>
CLH	<p>Next, Self-Awareness and Self-Management. How can we put that into practice?</p> <p>A Teacher Wellness Behavior is to openly share where you are on your own emotional barometer. Am I arriving at class feeling guilty, anxious, practical, or</p>

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	<p>confident? Did something trigger my stress? How can I hit reset to be present and effective for my students?</p> <p>A way to model this for students is to identify your emotions, linking them to your behavior and speaking about your stress-management strategies, which will encourage your students to be disciplined about their own self-direction. You can share your own state of mind and coping process for being “learner ready” before asking them to share theirs. You can also conduct deep-breathing exercises together to bring everyone to a learner-ready state when needed. An emotional barometer is a tool that can be used in in-person and remote community-building circles, as well.</p>
GK	<p>Finally, let’s look at responsible decision-making. Teachers make thousands of decisions a day, right?</p> <p>When we get overwhelmed, our ability to make caring and constructive choices can be diminished. And teachers likely make more decisions per day than the average adult! A teacher wellness behavior to ease your decision-making process is to be open with your students about your classroom decisions. Share the “why” of the learning choices you are offering and how you believe it will impact them.</p> <p>Here’s a way to model this for students. When you are transparent with students about your classroom decisions, try framing it this way:</p> <p>First, Define the decision that needs to be made.</p> <p>Second, Share the options you are considering, the pros and cons of each, and how each option will impact the students.</p> <p>Third, Solicit student input.</p> <p>Finally, choose an option, act on it, and then evaluate the results with students.</p> <p>As you do this, you showcase your skills in:</p> <p>Demonstrating open-mindedness</p> <p>Making a judgment after analyzing information</p> <p>Anticipating the consequences of your actions</p>
CLH	<p>Okay, so the CASEL 5 has meaning for teachers, too. Let’s move into building teacher resilience. Here are a few key terms to know as we talk about your next topic of building resilience, courtesy of the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at the American Institutes of Research’s <a href="#">Educator Resilience and Trauma-Informed Self-Care</a>. I’ve linked it in the transcript for you, listeners. It’s a good read.</p> <p>Trauma refers to an event, a series of events, or circumstances that are experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening, that</p>

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	<p>overwhelms the ability to cope, and that has adverse effects on mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.</p> <p>Secondary traumatic stress is the emotional distress that results when an individual hears about the traumatic experiences of another individual, such as hearing trauma survivors’ stories and seeing high levels of stress resulting from a traumatic event.</p> <p>Compassion fatigue is “The physical and mental exhaustion and emotional withdrawal experienced by those who care for sick or traumatized people over an extended period of time.”</p> <p>And Burnout: “...[P]hysical and mental exhaustion, a sense of dread about work, and frequent feelings of cynicism, anger, or irritability are key signs of burnout. Those in helping professions, such as doctors, may notice dwindling compassion toward those in their care. Feeling like you can no longer do your job effectively may also signal burnout.”</p>
GK	<p>Glad we got clear on that! Now how can we build up our resilience to prevent states such as burnout and compassion fatigue?</p> <p>Just like our students, we can experience a range of trauma responses that can impact our day-to-day life.</p> <p>Common reactions to trauma are emotional, behavioral, physical, and cognitive.</p> <p>Emotional trauma responses include irritability, sadness, anxiety, depression, guilt, grief, fear, apathy/numbing, agitation, and anger.</p> <p>Behavioral trauma responses include withdrawal, aggression, increased conflict, crying frequently, excessive worry, difficulty communicating or listening, blaming other people for everything, changes in energy levels, regressed behaviors (in children), increased risk-taking (such as substance use), and decline in school/job performance.</p> <p>Physical trauma responses include headaches/stomachaches, heart racing, fatigue, muscle pain, disrupted sleep/appetite, and a heightened startle response.</p> <p>Cognitive trauma responses include confusion, difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, racing thoughts, preoccupation with the event, such as intrusive thoughts/memories, and trouble thinking clearly.</p>
CLH	<p>The good news is that there are common factors associated with resilience in the face of trauma, adversity, and secondary traumatic stress. It’s worth noting that teaching across learning environments also requires resilience, the capacity to adapt positively to adversity or challenges. These protective factors help us cope with adversity and serve us well as we shift from in-person to remote to hybrid learning environments.</p>

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	<p>Factors that are associated with resilience are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Sense of control</li><li>Sense of meaning and purpose</li><li>Spirituality</li><li>Self-awareness and emotional regulation skills</li><li>Social support</li><li>Healthy coping style</li><li>Humor and optimism</li><li>Cognitive flexibility</li><li>Positive thinking</li><li>Adaptability to change</li></ul>
GK	<p>That's such a great list of protective factors that promote resilience that we need to connect it to some examples of supportive and portable practices, as well as digital tools. So we'll go through that list again, and this time give some hot tips. You can find links to everything we mention by name in the transcript!</p> <p>First, a sense of control. You can create a sense of control by setting boundaries around your work and personal lives: consider turning on the vacation reply function of your email after a specific time in the afternoon and over the weekend.</p> <p>Second, a sense of meaning and purpose. To build up this protective factor, you can spend 20 minutes <a href="#">life crafting</a> to chart a path to achieving your goals and hone your sense of purpose using a short series of writing prompts. Got this one from the</p>
CLH	<p>Third, spirituality, which can protect against symptoms of anxiety, but isn't necessarily the same as religion. Spirituality is typically associated with seeking a sense of peace and a search for meaning in life. The meditation app <a href="#">Headspace</a> offers science-backed mindfulness tools and provides free access for K-12 teachers.</p> <p>Next, self-awareness and emotional regulation skills. We can use <a href="#">digital journals</a> to help observe our emotional state and see patterns in our thoughts and behaviors over time. <a href="#">Gratitude journals</a>, when used consistently, have been shown to improve mood and a sense of optimism (and as a bonus...it's good for sleep!).</p>
GK	<p>A good night's sleep should be the first protective factor on the list!</p> <p>But here's a good one, too: social support. For social support, try keeping track of your relationships, perhaps in Google Sheets - who are the friends, family members,</p>

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	<p>and colleagues in your support network? When did you last check in with them? Spend time together? When are their birthdays? Are you due to reconnect with the people most important to you?</p> <p>What's up next?</p>
CLH	Healthy coping style.
GK	<p>For a healthy coping style, there is an abundance of portable tools/apps that can help develop healthy coping habits. Here are just a few to explore: <a href="#">MoodKit</a>, <a href="#">Habit Tracker</a>, <a href="#">Worry Watch</a>, and <a href="#">Ten Percent Happier</a>. Just as a reminder, we love these resources, but don't represent them in any way.</p>
CLH	<p>It's a starting place!</p> <p>Okay next. For humor and optimism, you can envision the life you want to have with this <a href="#">free digital vision board maker</a>. Find more ways to laugh through an online resource called a <a href="#">laughter toolbox</a>. Watch a few episodes of <i>Abbott Elementary</i> if it's not “too close to home”!</p> <p>For cognitive flexibility, sharpen the saw now and then! Test your cognitive flexibility with this fun brain teaser on <a href="#">sharpbrains dot com</a>. Or set a goal to try a new activity once a month – visit a new part of town, volunteer, take a class, try out an instrument; all of these novel activities build your cognitive flexibility!</p>
GK	<p>For positive thinking, you can become more aware of your tendency to think glass half-full or half-empty with an <a href="#">optimism test</a>. That's the Martin Seligman one from the field of positive psychology. . Become a student again by trying <a href="#">online positive thinking classes</a>.</p> <p>Finally, for adaptability to change, try something new and fun in <a href="#">educational technology</a>. I usually turn to Jennifer Gonzalez and Cult of Pedagogy for this. If you're like me, you'll feel proud of your new skill and talk about it all the time.</p>
CLH	<p>Now it's your turn! In your workbook, you will have a chance to reflect on your own well-being by doing a self-assessment and creating a well-being plan!</p> <p>The goal of the TALE Academy is to help teachers rethink education so that everyone—students, families, educators, school leaders, and communities—all have the opportunity to succeed. You've just added another tool to your toolbox when you take care of your own mental health and well-being.</p> <p>Thanks for listening.</p>

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