

Compassionate Teaching Online

With all of the challenges your students are experiencing during the past months and years of the pandemic, you are called to teach with **compassion, empathy and care**. Establish a relationship of trust with your students, starting at the beginning of your course, and then carry out this trust throughout the semester. In this issue of the Online Teaching Coaching Newsletter, we present four tips for compassionate online teaching: **Be Present; Show Empathy; Listen; and Share Resources**. We provide examples of best practices for how to approach & implement compassionate teaching in synchronous and asynchronous course online environments. We also encourage you to review the strategies for empathy shared in [“Our Online Learners Need More Empathy and Less Criticism”](#) (Goyak 2021, *Faculty Focus*).

Please consider, save, and use these tips and best practices now, and for when you next teach online!

TIPS FOR COMPASSIONATE TEACHING ONLINE



BE PRESENT

Be authentic, consistent, and learner-focused. Your presence and engagement as instructor will positively impact students' engagement, and ultimately will facilitate their learning.

LISTEN

Create an informal space for open and compassionate listening in your course. Students may want to share their thoughts in an informal dialogue with each other, and with you as instructor.

SHOW EMPATHY

Your students may feel physically, emotionally, and academically stressed and exhausted. Show them empathy, compassion, and care through your flexibility, guidance, and assistance.

SHARE RESOURCES

Provide assistance to your students with tutorials for academic content, sharing resources for online learning, and by directing them to Mason student resources (e.g., Libraries, Learning Services, Counseling & Psychological Services, Center for Advancement of Well-Being).

[View “Tips for Compassionate Teaching Online” infographic online](#)

[Read “Thriving in the Online Classroom” \(GMU Center for Advancement of Well-Being\)](#)

(written by Laura Dallman, Mason student)

Practices for Compassionate Teaching Online

BE PRESENT

- Make sure that your instructor presence is visible to learners through regular and effective use of Blackboard announcements, email, discussion forums and other communication tools.
- Create an [inclusive, supportive, and engaging climate](#) in your online course, such as using learners' names and pronouns and using inclusive language (we/our/us).
- Promptly return all phone calls and emails that you receive from our students.
- Every time you check into your asynchronous online course, leave some evidence to your students that you were there (e.g., new announcement, discussion comment, etc.).

BE EMPATHETIC

- Be reasonable & flexible with late policies and penalties, particularly if learners need extra time due to pandemic-related disruptions in their lives.
- Scaffold assignments into smaller chunks to keep student workload manageable. Scaffolding also will allow students to get feedback (from you) about their work along the way, as they complete larger projects or assignments.
- Check [Performance Dashboard](#) and [Retention Center](#) in your Blackboard course, reach out to students who are falling behind, and offer them [tips to help them succeed](#).

LISTEN

- Create resources or optional activities intended to build a sense of [social presence and community](#), such as “Water Cooler”, “Student Lounge” and/or “Ask Your Instructor” forums.
- Set ground rules to create a safe environment for open and compassionate communication & discussion, so that students know their ideas and viewpoints will be respected.
- For synchronous online courses, schedule some time to informally chat with students before or after the class session.
- For synchronous or asynchronous online courses, schedule brief, informal and optional “listening sessions” to allow class members to interact informally with you and each other in real time. Such sessions may be part of virtual office hours, Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate Ultra.

SHARE RESOURCES

- Provide students with resources which are geared to learners studying online, such as [Keep Learning website](#) (Mason Learning Services).
- Provide [links to technical support resources at Mason](#), and [Blackboard Help Tutorials](#). Post the contact information and hours for Mason's Information Technology Services (ITS). Make students aware of where they may find information about [ITS alerts and bulletins](#), including unplanned outages.
- Post a “first-aid kit” of information. Share links to Mason resources for [student health services](#), [student emergency financial assistance](#), and [counseling and psychological services](#). See the Stearns Center website for list of [Student Support Resources on Campus](#).

Contact Us!

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