Good stress versus distress

Not all stress is bad. Most, if not all of us recognize this simple fact, and yet when was the last time you heard anyone say, "I'm stressed" with a smile on their face or joy in their heart?

The reality is, stress exists on a continuum, from good stress to distress. Good stress is the stress that challenges you, motivates you, perhaps even helps you focus. Teachers put their students through good stress every day by asking them to take an more challenging math problems, tackle difficult texts, and attempt new skills. Good stress helps us grow and develop as human beings.

However, there comes a point on the continuum when good stress becomes distress, when stress stops being motivating and instead becomes overwhelming. It's important for each of us to be aware of our stress at any given moment so that we know if we are being challenged (good stress) or overcome (distress).

It's also important for us to be aware of stress of others so that we can continue to support and challenge them as needed. But, recognizing if other's are in a state of good stress or distress can be challenging. Not everyone wears their stress publicly. To help others think about their stress, and gain an awareness of their stress, draw the Good Stress-Distress continuum (see below) on whiteboard or sheet of paper. Ask your students, athletes, kids, or colleagues to put an X on the curve indicating their current stress level. They don't need to explain why they are feeling that good stress or distress — this activity is simply about awareness. However,

as a team leader, educator, coach, or parent, you can use your knowledge of others stress to push them further (good stress) or provide support if they are in distress.

Download a PDF of the continuum.

This activity is one of several extension activities in the Growth Mindset module of The ESSENTIALS, a new resource for middle and high school students. The ESSENTIALS modules draw upon nearly 25 years of applied research and development in various K-16 education settings, the workplace, and diverse athletic environments. Each module is a blueprint of research-based best practices for developing an essential character and culture skill needed for success in school, work, and beyond. Click here to order The ESSENTIALS for your students.

Return to learn: citizenship

There is, perhaps, no more important time to be a good citizen than during a global pandemic. Each of us plays a critical role in contributing to the health and well-being of others. Whether returning to the classroom or engaging in online learning, educators, administrators, students, and families

have an important role to play in maintaining the health and safety of all parties, and contributing to a positive educational environment.

The Leader-to-Detractor tool serves two important purposes. First, it defines what each role — detractor, participant, and leader — looks like in action. Good citizens are able to change detractor behaviors to participant behaviors, and participant behaviors to leader behaviors. Second, one can use the tool reflectively by asking, "were my actions that of a leader, detractor, or participant, and what do I need to do better or differently tomorrow to be a better citizen?"

Citizenship for Educators: Educators can use the Leader-to-Detractor tool to define what each role looks like in their classroom (virtual or in person). You may choose to include leader to detractor behaviors that are specific to following health guidelines as well. Share these definitions with parents so they know what your expectations are as well.

Citizenship for Students: Once students have worked with educators or parents on defining what leaders, participants, and detractors look like in action, they can engage in daily self-reflection to gauge their behaviors for the day. Students should note if there are instances in which they are more likely to be a detractor or participant and create and follow a plan to be a leader in every circumstance. Their reflection can be centered on school, home, following health guidelines, or a combination of all three.

Citizenship for Families: Families can use the Leader-to-Detractor tool to identify leader, participant, and detractor behaviors they observe each day. These may be behaviors the student exhibits, or observations of others, whether at the grocery store, at work, or in the community. Ask your student what leader to detractor behaviors they notice in others each day, and what could be done better or differently to be a leader in each situation.

Download the Leader-To-Detractor tool.

Return to learn: caring

Caring can be demonstrated in numerous ways. We can demonstrate caring by maintaining social connections, supporting friends and family who are struggling, completing random acts of kindness, or simply being available for a friend who needs a safe, compassionate listener.

The attitude and effort we choose to display is another way we show caring. Bringing a positive attitude each day, to every task, is a great way to show that you care. Likewise, the amount of effort we put forth is another indicator of how much we care about someone or something. The Attitude + Effort = Improvement (AEI) tool is a simple way to reflect on whether you brought a positive attitude and effort to a task, and by extension, how much you cared.

Caring for Educators: Use the AEI tool to define for your students what great, good, and poor attitude and effort looks like in action. Be sure to help students see the distinction between attitude and effort (you can have a positive attitude and put forth no effort, and vice versa). Ask students what they can do to demonstrate a great attitude and work ethic each day, whether remote or in-person. Then, have them reflect on their attitude and effort each day.

Caring for Students: Students can track their daily attitude and effort on a 1 (poor) through 3 (great) scale and see if they notice any trends. For example, their attitude and effort is great when working on math, but poor when working on Spanish. Students can then create a plan for what to do better or differently to improve their attitude and effort where needed.

Caring for Families: The AEI tool provides a simple way to engage your student in self-reflection. Ask your student to rate himself or herself on their attitude and effort each day and ask them what they can do better the next day. The conversation is even more powerful you reflect on their own attitude and effort each day and try to improve with your student.

Download the Attitude + Effort = Improvement tool

Return to learn: fairness

In a time of uncertainty, it can be difficult to find fair solutions for diverse groups of stakeholders. Is it fair to prohibit young people from participating in social activities when it appears the effects of COVID-19 aren't as severe for young and healthy people? On the other hand, is it fair to individuals in a demographic with more risk if young people increase their exposure to the virus and then spread it to others?

When clear solutions aren't available, it's up to individuals to negotiate win-win solutions that account for the needs and wants of all parties to reach a fair solution for the greater good. To do this, one must listen to understand what the other party wants by asking questions and restating what the other person says to ensure clarity. You must also clearly describe what it is you desire and why. Only when all parties understand that this is what you want and this is what I want, can you work together to find a "we could" win-win solution.

Fairness for Educators: Few things will be normal this school year. Educators will have to negotiate win-win solutions on everything from how students will pass each other in the hallways to how students will eat lunch. In every negotiation, commit to understanding the other person's perspective, clearly state your idea, and stay focused on your common ground — what you both want to achieve.

Fairness for Students: Students can use the Win-Win

Negotiation tool to help them find compromise with teachers or parents. For example, students using win-win negotiation when asking permission to attend a social event would clearly articulate what they want (to attend event) and why they want it (to see their friends), and would listen to and understand what their parent wants (child to be safe and healthy). Then, both parties can focus on solutions that can meet this objective (you can attend the event if there are less than 10 people and you wear a mask).

Fairness for Families: Families can use the Win-Win Negotiation tool to help find compromise over work time, if students are working from home. Or, the tool could be used to reach agreement on what social activities students can engage in. Families can even use it when finding solutions with schools on everything from behavior issues to virtual versus in-person attendance.

Download the Win-Win Negotiation tool

Return to learn: responsibility

When under stress, or outside of our comfort zone, it can be tempting to shy away from responsibility. However, it is critical as the school year progresses that each person take responsibility for their role in ensuring a safe and productive learning environment.

When norms and routines are disrupted, it can be easy to lose sight of our goals and the process we need to follow to achieve those goals. The Goal Map tool is an excellent resource to focus attention on the action steps needed to continue progressing towards our objectives, especially when we are outside of our comfort zone.

Responsibility for Educators: The unique challenges of this school year likely feel overwhelming. How do you transition your entire curriculum to online delivery? How do you track student progress when you don't see your students each day? How do you create a productive classroom space while still following health guidelines? Use the Goal Map to break down what seem like insurmountable tasks into small, achievable action steps. Devote your time and energy solely to each step until you are ready to move on to the next action step.

Responsibility for Students: Students can use the Goal Map to craft a plan for achieving objectives each day, each week, each month, or even over an entire semester. Whether attending school online or in person, the Goal Map can help students identify what tasks need to be completed, in what order, and track their progress towards completion.

Responsibility for Families: The Goal Map is a great tool for families to use to help their students create a learning plan, especially for students working online. Create a Goal Map each day, outlining the objective for the day, and the action steps needed to reach those objectives. Then, review the Goal Map at the end of the day to track progress and ensure students are taking the necessary steps to be successful each day.

Return to learn: respect

Every school stakeholder — students, parents, educators, and administrators — have a key role in the success of each school year. How well these stakeholders work together and treat each other with respect ultimately determines how successful the year will be.

A Compact for Excellence is a simple tool to help groups of people agree on what they need to do in order to do their best work and treat each other with care and respect. To use a Compact, create a list of expectations (see sample below) that outline what every stakeholder needs to do in order to ensure their best work can be done and everyone is treated well.

Then, ask all stakeholders the following questions:

1. Is there anything else that needs to be added to this list?
2. Is there anything that needs to be clarified?
3. Is there anything that you cannot or will not do?
4. Do we agree to work with these guidelines?

Respect for Educators: At the beginning of each school year, educators set classroom rules and expectations. This year is no different, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic you may need to update these expectations to address online learning, following health guidelines at school, or even create a Compact with parents and families so all stakeholders have clear guidelines for how everyone can do their best work and treat each other with care and respect.

Respect for Students: Whether working at home, in school, or in a hybrid setting, think about what is needed for you to do your best work and treat others well (teachers, parents, siblings, other students, etc.). Create a Compact for Excellence that outlines what all parties agree to do in order to do your best work and treat each other well, no matter the environment. You can also create a Compact with your group before beginning a new group project.

Respect for Families: Create a Compact for Excellence with your children that outlines how you will work together to ensure that everyone can do their work effectively and treat each other well. Agreements could be: 15-minute active break for every 60 minutes of work, only engage on social media during breaks, negotiate who utilizes work spaces (at home), maintain social distance and wear a mask (if back at school), and so on.

Download a Compact for Excellence

Return to learn: trustworthiness

This year, perhaps more than any other, parents, educators, and students are making incredibly challenging decisions. It's important in these moments to assume best intentions, and trust that everyone is trying to do what they think is right and necessary to ensure a safe and impactful education experience.

In situations where there isn't a clear and obvious answer, it's useful to have a tool, like the Integrity-in Action Checklist, to help check our decision-making. Not every decision will pass each test below. Sometimes, the right decision isn't fair to everyone, for example. However, checking your actions against the Integrity-in-Action Checklist can help ensure that you make good choices and maintain trust.

Trustworthiness for Educators: Even people with the best of intentions can sometimes make the wrong decision, especially when navigating the countless changes created by a global pandemic. As you work to bring students back to the classroom safely, or migrate your lessons to online delivery, use the Integrity-in-Action Checklist to make sure the choices you make are thoughtful and build trust with students, parents, and your colleagues.

Trustworthiness for Students: Students can use the Integrity-

in-Action Checklist to help them make choices that could impact the health and safety of others. ("Is it fair to my classmates if I don't follow guidelines to help stop the spread of COVID-19?") Likewise, students working remotely can use the checklist to help make good decisions about how they engage with school. ("Do I want others to know that I was watching TV rather than paying attention to this online lesson?")

Trustworthiness for Parents: The decisions parents make in the best interest of their child also impact the health, safety, and learning experiences of everyone else at school. Use the Integrity-in-Action Checklist to make sure the decisions you make are not only good for your children, but the teachers and other students with whom they interact. In addition, families can use the checklist to help guide the decisions their students make. "I know it's uncomfortable to wear a mask, but let's look at the truth test. While the mask is uncomfortable, the truth is I can wear it, get used to it, and keep myself and others safe."

Download an Integrity-In-Action Checklist

6-12 lesson plan: responsibility

Lesson Matrix: C4. RESPONSIBILITY. Students demonstrate the trait of responsibility by taking ownership of their lives and acknowledging their power to choose what they think (including their attitudes and mindsets), say, and do. They are accountable for the consequences of their choices.

- C4.7. Learning From Experience. Students accept their responsibility to review and learn from all experiences. They hold themselves accountable to determine what they could have done differently to get a better result and what they should do in the future.

Social Goal

- Students will discuss, based their experience, the impact of messes on their lives, minds, and community.

Content Goal

- Students will explore ways to demonstrate responsibility by cleaning and organizing their space.

Language Goal:

- Students will share ideas about ways to clean and organize their lives to demonstrate they are responsible citizens of their school, home, and community.

Purpose:

April showers bring May flowers. Spring cleaning and a transition into the coming months of summer is a great opportunity to help students recognize opportunities to show responsibility by cleaning their home, school, and community. Students can demonstrate they are responsible by finding places to clean.

Lesson:

Stand next to the image that best represents your level of clean. (5 minutes).
(Picture 1, Picture 2, Picture 3, Picture 4, Picture 5, Picture 6)

- In your bedroom
- In your locker
- In your school
- In your car (HS)
- In your mind

Discuss 1 or 2 with an elbow partner (3 minutes)

- How does clutter and being messy cause problems in people's lives?
- How have you struggled with clutter in your mind, home, locker, and life throughout this year?
- Rate yourself from 1 (low) to 5 (high) on being responsible and caring for the spaces in your life?

Discuss whole group (3 minutes)

- What does it mean to be responsible?
- How can being cluttered or having a messy room/locker/backpack or mind show your level of responsibility?

Productive Group Work (7 minutes)
Students read and discuss the *Psychology of a Messy Room article.*

https://www.verywellmind.com/psychology-of-a-messy-room-4171244

- How does disorganization or messy spaces make you feel?
- What does the article say about the psychology of a messy room?
- How can we be more responsible by decluttering/cleaning?
- What is one space you are going to clean this week/month?

Family Connection

- Tech Support
  - Download a Housecleaning APP
  - Create a chore list in COZI or on a shared note or Google Drive document
- Pillar Time
  - Create a chore list as a family and post it in a prominent place
  - Go through any storage items and determine if you have used it in the last year, and donate it if not
  - Pick up garbage in the neighborhood as a family

- Dinner Discussion
    - What does it mean to be responsible in your family?
    - What is one space in your life that needs to be cleaned?
    - How does keeping an area clean and organized show you are responsible?

6-12 lesson plan: trustworthiness

CHARACTER COUNTS! Matrix Outcome: C2. TRUSTWORTHINESS. Students develop and demonstrate the character trait of trustworthiness. They understand that trust is an essential ingredient in meaningful and lasting relationships, as well as school and career success, and they strive to earn the trust of others by demonstrating the ethical virtues of integrity, honesty, promise-keeping, and loyalty.

- C2.1. Integrity. Students demonstrate integrity by adhering to ethical principles, acting honorably and assuring that there is consistency between their beliefs, words, and actions. They safeguard their integrity and demonstrate their character by exercising the moral courage to do the right thing even when it is difficult or detrimental to their relationships, social standing, careers, or economic well-being (i.e., they do

the right thing even when it costs more than they want to pay).

Social Goal

- Students will discuss traits of trustworthy people.

Content Goal

- Students will list opportunities to improve their #TrustTraits.

Language Goal:

- Students will list the traits of trustworthy people in their lives and highlight them in a reading about being trustworthy.

Purpose:
We have many examples of trustworthy individuals in our lives, but we do not always stop to reflect what character traits are present in someone we trust. This lesson will examine nine traits of trustworthy people. Participants will determine if they have trustworthy characteristics, and which ones they could improve upon in their own lives.

<u>Lesson</u>

Independent (3 min)
Journal:

- Would you trust you?
- Why or Why Not?

Productive Group Work (12 min)
Read this article, highlight traits of trustworthy people, and answer the questions in a group

- Who is a person in your life that you trust?
- What about their character makes you trust them?
- What did you learn are traits of trustworthy people?

What is a trait mentioned in the article you are strong in, and one where you are weak?

Group discussion (5 min)

- What did you learn?
- How can we be more trustworthy?
- What is a weakness you
  ant to improve upon to be more trustworthy?

Family Connection

- Tech Support
    - Send a snapchat to your child about being trustworthy

- The next time your child does something trustworthy, post it on social media or text them kudos and a heartfelt message
- Pillar Time
    - Volunteer as a family at the Animal Rescue League or another local area to show trustworthy character
    - Play Blind retriever- blindfold one person and guide them with words to pick up an object across the yard or room.
- Dinner Discussion
    - Who is a person in your life that you trust?
    - What about their character makes you trust them?
    - What is challenging about being trustworthy?
    - How can you work as a family to become more trustworthy?

Way to Go Lesson Plans

CC! can help schools with a resource to provide online lessons for use during this time that schools are closed.

Teachers can share with students a 10-12 minute lesson incorporating compelling images, quotations and thought-provoking short writing and discussion activities that focus on each of the three core domains of student development: academic, social/emotional and character.

We are providing a number of these lessons free to any teacher that would like to incorporate character into their online learning experiences.

Elementary School Way To Go Lessons

Middle School Way to Go Lessons

High School Way to Go Lessons