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Special Edition Teaching Toolbox
Practicing Self-Care under New Teaching, and Working, Conditions
by Peter J. Eubanks and Emily O. Gravett

Since we've returned to teaching after an extended Spring Break, the CFI has hosted two online roundtables on self-care (and [one upcoming next week](#)). Now that we're doing everything remotely, and made other adjustments—both professional and personal—to deal with the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), it seems essential to make time for ourselves, in the hopes of creating new ways of living that are sustainable. We are all experiencing greater amounts of stress, fatigue, worry, pain, loss, and [grief](#)—and many of our old coping strategies are no longer available to us (e.g., exercising at the gym, going to live concerts, meeting friends for coffee)—or at least available to us in the same ways as before. In part, the roundtable itself was an act of self-care, a way of taking time for ourselves and connecting with colleagues.

In this roundtable, there was no formal presentation, no extensive slideshow; rather, the idea was to simply gather in community to exchange ideas and resources (like [this one](#)). Some of the self-care strategies were, of course, specific and idiosyncratic to the participants: visit the Harrisonburg Arboretum, journal, take hot baths, try out new recipes, limit consumption of the news, and so on. Others were more generally applicable, so we thought we'd share them out with the whole Teaching Toolbox listserv.

- Practice [gratitude](#)
- [Say “no”](#)
- Give yourself permission to be [“selfish”](#) (as in, put yourself first sometimes)
- Cultivate [self-compassion](#) (with free guides such as [Holstee's](#))
- [Stay in the present](#) (and look for an upcoming [CFI Podcast](#) on mindfulness for how to do so)
- Focus on what's really important
- Appreciate new perspectives and broader concerns
- Connect with others (and take advantage of technology to do so)
- Learn something new (as one of the roundtable participants said, “If not now, when?”)
- [Feel the feelings](#)
- Become attuned to and kind about others' needs

- Embrace flexibility and uncertainty
- Let go of perfectionism; be a “good enoughist” (found in Brené Brown’s *The Gifts of Imperfection*, 2010, available as an [eBook](#) from JMU Libraries)

Furthermore, as the CFI teaching team was reflecting on self-care, we were reminded of Robert Browning’s famous poem, “[Saul](#),” which recounts the biblical story of a young David playing music to soothe King Saul—an important reminder of the power of the arts and creativity to comfort and strengthen in times of uncertainty. Many organizations throughout the world have made various cultural offerings available for free online at this time. These music, dance, museum, library, and other resources can not only be a part of our wellness and self-care practices during this period of social distancing, but they can also serve as educational opportunities for children (and adults!) who will not be returning to school for the remainder of the academic year. While many of the resources below relate directly to the arts and cultural life, some are also just fun opportunities made possible through the wonders of technology!

- Free, often live, classical music concerts [abound online](#) right now, from the Metropolitan Opera to the Berlin Philharmonic to many, many more
- The National Film Board of Canada has made [over 300 films available](#) at no cost
- Watch London shows, musicals, and operas [streaming for free](#); the Royal Opera House has made excellent performances available for free [here](#)
- Look at beautiful vistas from hotels, in the United States (such as [the Richmond Falcon cam](#), [Malibu Beach Inn Live Beach Cam](#)) and around the world (such as the [Inbal Live Cam in Jerusalem, Israel](#)); find others at [Explore.org](#)
- Take a virtual tour of [30 world-class art museums](#). Also do a virtual visit of the [Frida Kahlo Museum](#) outside of Mexico City
- Tour National Parks [from home](#), if not in person (FYI: [Shenandoah National Park](#) is still open!)
- Take virtual tours of famous global sites, from [Versailles](#) to the [Vatican](#), as well as [these sites](#) from around the world
- Relive old sporting events online, watch sports documentaries (ESPN is releasing its 10-part [Michael Jordan series early](#)), or laugh along with sportscaster Joe Buck’s [“Quarantine Calls”](#)
- Watch time-bound [24 hour plays: The Viral Monologues](#)
- Browse the [MOMA’s free online collection](#)
- Take [Yale’s popular “happiness” course](#) for free

In addition to all of the above, the Modlin Center for the Arts at the University of Richmond is maintaining an extensive list of free concerts, museum and opera tours, theater and dance performances, and much more, called [Virtual Tours](#). And [openculture.com](#) continues to have thousands of university lectures, courses, films, music files, podcasts, audio recordings, etc. for free online!

And, for many of us, we may first need to figure out ways to occupy our homebound kids in order to practice self-care (and maybe find [some humor](#) amidst it all). Here are some ways to do so:

- Have your children learn to draw with such notables as [Mo Willems and Amie Kaufman](#)
- [Download free coloring books from 113 museums](#)
- Listen to [free stories](#) for kids of all ages
- Get kids into practicing yoga (using videos like [Cosmic Kids Yoga](#))
- Disney is offering free [virtual rides](#) and has launched [Magic Moments](#) to experience anywhere
- Spotify Kids is [rolling out in the U.S.](#) for kids at home (free trial for one month)
- Paris museums have put 100,000 images [online](#) for children to explore
- The City of Philadelphia offers [free virtual tours](#) of its world-class museums, historic sites, and a live-camera view of the Philadelphia Zoo
- [Selma Online](#) is offering free civil rights lessons
- The Sesame Street Workshop has launched [a resource site for kids](#)
- J.K. Rowling has created the [Harry Potter at Home hub](#)
- Children (and adults) can learn about Virginia history [here](#)
- Explore [Shakespeare for Kids](#), with fun activities sponsored by the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., and watch other [theater performances for kids](#) (ages 2-10)
- Watch a live performance for young people, like [Trusty Sidekick Theatre Company](#)
- Learn new skills, like [percussion](#), [puppetry](#), or [movement](#) (content from the New Victory Theatre)
- [Teach art from home](#)

Water cannot be drawn from an empty well. As we practice these and other self-care strategies and take advantage of the resources available to us, we find ourselves better able to serve our students, community, family, and friends—all while seeing to our own health and wellness during this unique

period of our lives.

About the authors: Peter J. Eubanks is Associate Professor of French and a Faculty Teaching Fellow in the Center For Faculty Innovation. He can be reached at eubankpj@jmu.edu. Emily O. Gravett is an assistant director in the [Center for Faculty Innovation](#) and an assistant professor in the [Department of Philosophy & Religion](#). She can be reached at graveteo@jmu.edu.

For more information about the CFI's Teaching Toolboxes, please visit:

<https://www.jmu.edu/cfi/teaching/other/teaching-toolbox.shtml>