

TEACHERS TOOLKIT

[Stoicare.com](https://stoicare.com)





In this toolkit

Best practices for teachers

- Focus on what you can control
- Be a good role model
- Building a relationship
- Applying the 4 Cs to teaching

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Focus on what you can control

- As teachers we are often held accountable for things which are outside of our control, like the student's grades or their behavior. It is good to focus on what we can control; our own thoughts and intentions.
- Remember, we don't *actually* control the students. However, you can still be a really good role model and you can focus on what IS under your control.
 - Budget cuts, changes to what and how you teach, class sizes are all outside of your control, so you can only focus on your own thoughts and intentions
- Beware presenteeism and overwork. Remember to '*put your own oxygen mask on first*' and have the courage to place boundaries around *when* you are working. If you are going to have a sustainable career, it will mean not being instantly available to students and parents when you are not at work. Remember the 80/20 rule, if you do 80% of the effort, students will do 20% and vice versa.
- These days teachers can come in for a lot of criticism online or even face to face with parents and students. It makes it even more important to be able to place your focus on aiming at the target of doing a good job for the students, whilst realizing that other people's opinions are not important. Remember that everyone has an opinion about how to teach, even if they have never spent a day in the classroom!

Be a good role model

- We are in a powerful position as teachers where we have a chance to be a good role model to a child or young person. Marcus Aurelius spends a lot of time in the meditations reminding himself about all the people who have been teachers and mentors to him.
- Even if a child or young person has no other good role models in your life, and although your time with them is short, you could still make the difference to them being able to live a good life.
- Look for your own role models. Did you have a particular teacher who made the difference to you? If you need inspiration, read Book 1 of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*.
- Stoics strive to be excellent people: wise, fair, kind, courageous, and self-controlled.
 - Think about how you can demonstrate these virtues in the classroom.
 - Look for "teachable moments" when you can help children or young people to reflect on the virtues.
- It is so important to show students how you reflect and improve on your own behavior. If you make it ok to make mistakes and to learn from them, students will be given permission to do that too! Try to show the students how you work on your emotional regulation, e.g. *'I used to get really upset about getting a bad grade because I was thinking that grades were all that mattered. In the end I realized that someone could get great grades and still not be living a good life.'* I often tell my students about how dropping out of university lead me to a better path where I connected with what I really wanted to do, but at the time I thought it was the end of the world!

Build a good relationship

- Try to establish a culture of it being ok to make mistakes, that through overcoming challenges we grow and become more resilient. When I make a mistake at work I try to deliberately share this with my students so that I am modelling that it is ok to be wrong, that what matters is that we are aiming to learn, not that we need to start with all the answers.
- Encourage the students to become teachers themselves. Can they teach a friend or the whole class something they have learned? Can they teach you? Openly discuss how wisdom, self-control, courage and justice make a good teacher. Can they apply these values when they are in the role of teacher?
- Remember you will need courage to have authority in the classroom. It takes strength of character to be able to say no to a child or young person, and to deal with them not 'liking' you. If you act with respect and self-control, having clear rules can help make the classroom a fun and safe place to be.
- Remember that humor is really important in the classroom when used wisely. It can help us come together as a community and can remind us about what is important when we are feeling stressed. Being able to joke about things going wrong can create stronger bonds and give us all permission to admit we are not perfect!

Applying the 4 Cs of Stoicism

- Remember the 4 Cs of Stoicism from Stoicare.com? Let's apply them specifically to being a teacher:
- **Character**
 - When things are challenging in the classroom, can you remind yourself that what is important is behaving with wisdom? Could you take a moment to breathe and then respond in a way that shows courage, kindness and self-control?
- **Cosmos**
 - Think about all the teachers in all the classrooms around the world at this moment, struggling with students trying to use their phones in class or staring out of the window! Feel your connection with them, they are your brothers and sisters. If things are challenging, consider whether it will matter in a week or a month or a year? Can you bring a plant or other natural materials into the classroom to remind you of your connection with nature?
- **Control**
 - Remember to that although you can aim at helping all the children or young people in your care to do well, you are not in control of their choices, they are independent of you and you are only one of many influencing factors in their eventual results. Therefore, focus on what you can control and do not be unkind to yourself when students fail despite your best efforts.
- **Choice**
 - Remember you always have a choice about how to respond in any situation. Make a choice that reflects your true character!

Resources

For Teachers

- [Should a teacher be Stoic?](#) Blogpost by Jeff Macloud
- [Modern Stoicism](#): A three-part series on teaching by Michael Burton
- A post on the [Daily Stoic](#) on teaching Stoicism to children
- A longer article on [Stoicism and teaching](#) by Mark Holowchak

For Students

- Ryan Holiday interviewing [Camilla Cabello](#)
- [Lots of resources for children and young people from Donald Robertson](#)



Inspiration

- “[Kids] don't remember what you try to teach them. They remember what you are.” [Jim Henson](#)
- “I’ve come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.” [Haim Ginott](#)
- “Be a teacher. Please? Please be a teacher. Teachers are the most admirable and important people in the world. You don’t have to do it forever, but if you’re in doubt about what to do, be an amazing teacher. Just for your twenties. Be a primary school teacher. Especially if you’re a bloke – we need male primary school teachers. Even if you’re not a Teacher, be a teacher. Share your ideas. Don’t take for granted your education. Rejoice in what you learn..” [Tim Minchin](#)

