

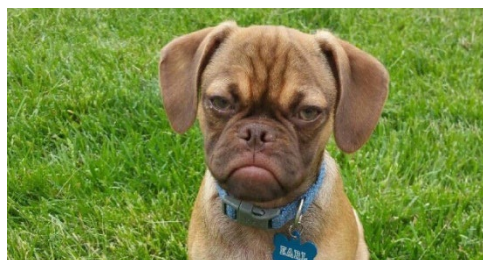


The "Grumpy" Time of the Semester: Working Together

We have entered the time in the semester when we and our students may experience increased pressure, anxiety, and compassion fatigue challenging us to empathize with our students' and each other's stress. How might we minimize our "grumpiness" during this time? What might be helpful?

Inviting students to connect content to lived experience. As we recognize that this is likely a time of high stress and low energy for all of us, we may benefit from incorporating interesting, personally meaningful topics in our courses. When we are engaged, our students tend to become engaged. Involve students in learning activities that ask them to make connections between the course content and their lived experience.

- Solicit topics, questions that are relevant and/or of interest to the students.
- Invite students to graphically display their understanding of the content, its relevance to their professional careers, post-graduate plans. In groups, students discuss commonalities and/or differences among their drawings.
- Invite students to share images, media demonstrating how the content connects to their personal, professional, academic experiences. Invite them to explain why/how this connection is meaningful to them.
- Invite students to reflect on how they have grown during the semester, such as, what do you know, value, are able to do now that you didn't know before taking this course? Who and/or what contributed to that change? What would you use to support your claim of this change?



Providing catch-up days and mental health days. As we discussed in VITALITY titled Supporting Students Mental Health, [part 1](#) and [part 2](#), we need to support the collective well-being of our students and ourselves. We may offer review day(s) to re-examine or revisit content areas, catch up day(s) to slow the pace, or mental health day(s) to allow our students and ourselves time to breath amid the stressful demands of the semester.



Investing in self-care. "We cannot pour from an empty cup" - I heard these words at a professional development event, and they have remained with me. We cannot give of ourselves when we have nothing left to give; thus, we need to care for our mental, emotional, physical health. Our support systems-- colleagues, friends, family--can aid in this self-care process.

Recommitting to compassion. During the "grumpy" time of the semester, we may feel that we have less empathy to give. Empathy contributes to a supportive learning environment, which is essential towards the semester's end. Let us recommit to being compassionate, caring, and listening to support our students' learning. Let us continue to bring students' attention to supports that may help them. [Link](#) to academic, health, well-being, and technology resources.

How do you manage the "grumpy" part of the semester? Please share your tip(s) via [e-mail](#) to VITAL, and we will include, with credit, in the next issue.

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