

# REACHing Together: Supporting Students and Ourselves in Uncertain Times

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## Observations as we enter year 3 of the pandemic

Many students:

- want the traditional college experience, yet are also stressed about COVID
- find online learning convenient, but not always engaging
- consider precautions overly restrictive, but also inadequate

Many colleagues:

- want to work with students in traditional ways, but are also worried about COVID
  - find online and in-person interactions challenging
  - are concerned about student's education and well-being
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# A time of tensions and contradictions

Impact of funding, staffing

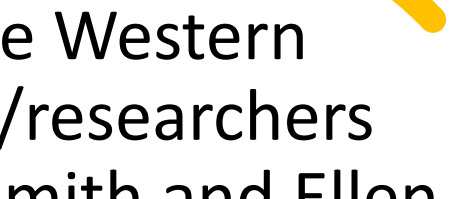
Mitigation fatigue

Amplification of non-pandemic  
stresses and life events

Respecting or holding boundaries  
while offering support



How can we  
support  
ourselves,  
colleagues &  
students?



We found the work of Case Western Reserve University faculty/researchers Richard Boyatzis, Melvin Smith and Ellen Van Oosten.

Their book is *Helping People Change: Coaching with Compassion for Lifelong Learning and Growth* ([Worldcat link](#)).

“Coaching with compassion” emphasizes the needs of the individual or group and forming or fostering connections.

# A Few (of Many) Book Highlights

Our environment is full of schedules and deadlines

Coaching for compliance can help with specific goals, but may not initiate sustained change for students or colleagues

Coaching with compassion: Resonant leaders foster others' strengths

- ask basic questions (aspirations? barriers?)
- support their discovery and process of long-term vision - how do students/colleagues want to grow?
- “fixing” a situation vs. supporting
- recognize our own motivations and feelings

The impact of different coaching styles has been studied

# REACH



RESONANCE



EMPATHY



AWARENESS



COMPASSION



HUMOR/HOPE

Van Oosten, E., Smith, M., & Boyatzis, R. (2020, June 15). [How to Support the People You Lead in Times of Uncertainty](#). *Greater Good Magazine*.

# REACHing Students

## Resonance

Connecting with their experiences – in reality, they are similar to our own

- Struggling through the pandemic
- Going through rapid changes and quick pivots
- We are all learning together

## Empathy

Understanding their stressors because you have felt that way before


- Situational – deadlines, multitasking, the unknown
- Managing time, emotions and capacity



# REACHing Students

**Awareness** - reflecting on how elevated stress levels affect your teaching/leadership ability.

Sources of stress:

- Larger teaching workload
  - COVID and adherence to (changing) policies
  - Switching between in-person class & Zoom
  - Meeting overload
  - Burnout and emotional labor
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# REACHing Students

## Compassion

Empathy plus action

- Providing flexibility
- Shrinking barriers when possible
- Providing clarity/simplicity in classroom sessions
- Demonstrating support and understanding
- Adjusting behaviors to account for less or different contact

## Hope/Humor

Cultivate safety and belonging

- Working with humor and humility
- Making room for play
- Taking ourselves less seriously in a respectful way
- Laughing when things go wrong (they will)
- Using uplifting language to foster hope and confidence in students





PADLET TIME

REACHing Students

# REACHing Colleagues & Supporting Ourselves

## Resonance

Connecting with experiences and goals

- All affected by staffing, lack thereof
- More initiatives, often with smaller budgets and less support
- Increased workloads
- Juggling work/life balance

## Empathy

Understanding their stressors


- Stress and more stress, all feeling it
- Situational – deadlines, multitasking, the unknown
- Managing time, emotions, capacity
- Communicating virtually



# REACHing Colleagues

**Awareness** - reflecting on how elevated stress levels affect your interactions and abilities.

Sources of stress:

- Pressure to perform at pre-pandemic level
  - Staffing concerns
  - Tone and inflection, especially virtually
  - COVID and adherence to (changing) policies
  - Meeting overload
  - Toxic positivity
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# REACHing Colleagues & Supporting Ourselves

## Compassion

Empathy plus action

- Trying to get through difficult times together
- Listening without judgment
- Doing what we can to help lift each other up
- Considering others' job and life commitments

## Hope/Humor

Cultivate safety and belonging

- Finding bright spots or things to look forward to when possible
- Sharing funny memes, gifs, videos – laughing as often as you can.
- Taking breaks when needed
- Celebrating team and individual wins – even small ones





# PADLET TIME

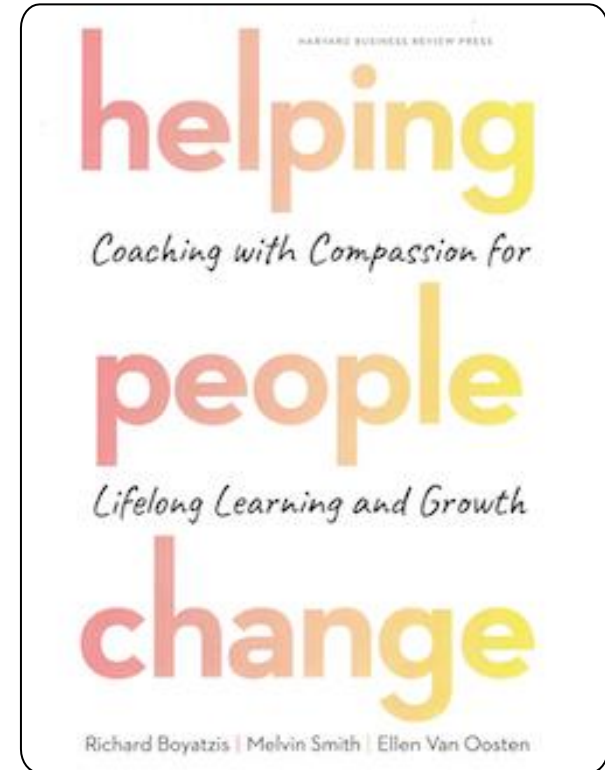
## REACHing Colleagues

# To Learn More

Boyatzis, R., Smith, M., & Van Oosten, E. (2019). *Helping people change: Coaching with compassion for lifelong learning and growth*. Harvard Business Review Press.

Boyatzis, R., Smith, M., & Van Oosten, E. (2020, June 15). [How to support the people you lead in times of uncertainty](#). *Greater Good Magazine*.

YouTube presentations and interviews with the authors





# REACHing Forward: Questions? Comments?

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Slides:

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