

# FACULTY TIPSHEET

## Leading and Teaching with Compassion

Compassion is understood to mean active sympathy or a willingness to bear the pain of others without becoming engulfed or overwhelmed with the pain or suffering. Compassion is a human condition and can support feelings of hope and connection. How can you connect with your students and help them to feel supported and not alone? Here are some tips help you to become a more compassionate teacher.

- 1. Show your students you care.** Acknowledge them with warmth and support. If they are having a difficult time, say, “This is really difficult. How can I help you in this moment?”
- 2. Smile at your students.**
- 3. Clear is kind.** Make sure your syllabus is clear and communicates course expectations and requirements. Having these stated early and then maintained provides a sense of stability and control for students.
- 4. Use a clear grading rubric.** Providing students with clear grading criteria will provide predictability and a sense of security.
- 5. Arrive early to class and be present.** Students often have questions about their courses that cause them distress. Being early to class gives students the opportunity to speak with you one-to-one without the fear of the other students judging them.
- 6. Hold consistent office hours.** Students need to know how and when they can reach out to you. It is UNL’s policy that all instructors hold regular office hours.
- 7. Take the time to observe and notice when a student is struggling.** Ask, “I noticed that you’ve missed a few classes. Are you okay?” Students appreciate when teachers take an interest in their well-being. If a student says they are not okay, share these resources: Counseling and Psychological Services [caps.unl.edu](https://caps.unl.edu), Big Red Resilience and Well-being [resilience.unl.edu](https://resilience.unl.edu), and Wellness Services [go.unl.edu/wellness](https://go.unl.edu/wellness). Raise academic concerns with the Academic Navigators team [go.unl.edu/navigators](https://go.unl.edu/navigators).
- 8. Don’t make assumptions.** Have the courage to ask questions and listen to understand.
- 9. Notice suffering.** Generously interpret it. Feel empathy and concern. Take action to alleviate it.
- 10. Practice self-compassion and care for yourself.** When you are struggling or having a difficult time, reach out for support and remember you are not alone.
- 11. Model compassion in everyday work interactions.** Doing so opens the possibility that an organization’s members can take compassion into their everyday relationships.

## RESOURCES

- *Awakening Compassion at Work: The Quiet Power that Elevates People and Organizations* by Monica Worline and Jane Dutton [awakeningcompassionatwork.com](https://awakeningcompassionatwork.com)
- “Unsung Hero” Compassion Ad [youtu.be/uaWA2GbcnJU](https://youtu.be/uaWA2GbcnJU)
- Random Acts of Kindness Foundation [randomactsofkindness.org](https://randomactsofkindness.org)
- Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford University [ccare.stanford.edu](https://ccare.stanford.edu)
- Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley [greatergood.berkeley.edu](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu)
- Compassion It [compassionit.com](https://compassionit.com)

