

Microlearning Summary - Expectations Part 1: Managing Self Expectations

Self-expectations shape how we show up for students, colleagues, and ourselves. When expectations are realistic and explicit, they provide structure, clarity, and motivation. But when expectations become rigid, perfectionistic, or rooted in “shoulds,” they can fuel guilt, frustration, and compassion fatigue. This microlearning explores how to identify unrealistic self-expectations and reframe them using affirmations that support resilience and self-compassion.

Why This Matters

- Unrealistic expectations drain emotional energy and increase compassion fatigue.
- “Should” statements reinforce the belief that we are falling short, even when we are doing our best.
- Reframing expectations builds self-compassion and reduces guilt and anxiety.
- Affirmations help shift internal narratives toward grounded, realistic, and sustainable beliefs.

Link to Microlearning Video

Expectations Part 1  School Expectations - Part 1

Expectations from Self and Others
Section 5

Self-Care for the MIND: Developing Positive Affirmations

Affirmations are carefully crafted thoughts and emotions that are internalized into your self-concept. The first two steps identify our affirmations; the next steps help plant these affirmations in our mind.

Step 1: Identify some of your unrealistic hurtful self-expectations related to parents, students, colleagues, and/or the profession. These are akin to negative forms of self-talk and when exposed, often indicate it is impossible to meet the standards we set for ourselves. These often contain words such as always, never, must, should, no one. List some of your primary hurtful self-expectations in column one of the blank table. (See examples in the completed table on the next page.)

Step 2: Take each hurtful self-expectation and change it into an alternative belief that feels right to you. These affirmations should be stated in the positive, be succinct yet specific, stated as if it already exists, and be only about you. (See the completed table for examples.)

 Step 1: Examples of Unrealistic Hurtful Self-expectations	Step 2: Examples of Positive Self-affirmations 

Expectations from Self and Others
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 Examples of Unrealistic Hurtful Self-expectations	Examples of Positive Self-affirmations 
No matter how well I teach, it will never be good enough.	I am good enough today as the person I am. While I will strive to do better in my work and life, I try to accept who I am today.
Nobody cares how hard I work, how much I care about my students.	I am a caring, empathetic, person who is deserving of self-compassion.
I have to be successful with all my students all the time. I must be an outstanding teacher, better than other teachers I know.	I am doing the best I know how to do, given the person I am today and the situation I am dealing with. When I know a better way and can do it, I will.
I can't feel good about myself unless I am completely successful in alleviating students' problems.	I accept myself as I am – knowing, that as I do, I feel more secure and confident within myself and with others.

Step 3: Follow one of these recommendations to help your affirmations take root as part of your self-concept:

- Select one affirmation a week for the next month. Or, select one affirmation that is really important to you and that you would like to focus on. Write it down and place it somewhere you will see it multiple times throughout the day.
- Tell someone your affirmation. We are more likely to meet our goals and act on our intentions when we share them with others.
- If you are a practitioner of meditation, choose one affirmation and focus on it with increasing clarity and intention while practicing a breathing or meditation technique. Continue repeating the affirmation to yourself while visualizing what it will be like and feel like when the affirmation has become real.

Micro-Reflection for after the micro-learning

- [Expectations Part 1 Reflection Questions for Staff](#)
- [Expectation Part 1 Leadership Considerations](#)



Signals to Notice

You may need to examine your self-expectations when you observe:

Signal	What It Might Mean
Frequent “should” or “must” self-talk	Expectations may be unrealistic or perfectionistic.
Feeling like your best is never enough	Internal standards may be impossible to meet.
Guilt when resting or setting boundaries	You may be overidentifying with productivity.
Anxiety about disappointing others	You may be carrying expectations that aren’t yours.
Difficulty celebrating progress	You may be focused on what’s missing rather than what’s working.

What This Looks Like in Practice

A teacher constantly tells herself, “I should be doing more for my students,” even though she stays late, supports families, and differentiates instruction. She feels guilty when she takes a break and anxious when she can’t meet every need. After learning about self-expectations, she identifies her hurtful belief (“I must meet every student’s need all the time”). She reframes it into an affirmation: “I am doing the best I can with the time, skills, and resources I have today.” She posts it near her desk and repeats it during transitions. Over time, she feels more grounded, less guilty, and more present with her students.

Grade-Band Strategies You Can Use Tomorrow

The following grade-band strategies offer quick, practical ways to apply this microlearning in your daily work. They are not required steps — simply additional options you can use to deepen the learning, strengthen resilience, and support students and colleagues in developmentally responsive ways. Choose the strategies that fit your role, your context, and your current needs.



K–2 Strategies

1. Replace “Should” with “I Can” or “I Choose To”
Steps: Notice “should” statements; restate them with agency.
Why it’s beneficial: Reduces guilt and increases empowerment.
2. Celebrate Small Wins Daily
Steps: Name one moment of connection or success at the end of the day.
Why it’s beneficial: Reinforces realistic expectations and boosts resilience.
3. Use Visual Affirmations
Steps: Post simple affirmations (“I am patient,” “I am learning”) in your workspace.
Why it’s beneficial: Supports positive self-talk and emotional regulation.
4. Model Self-Compassion for Students
Steps: Say aloud, “I made a mistake, and that’s okay — I can try again.”
Why it’s beneficial: Normalizes imperfection and reduces internal pressure.

3–5 Strategies

1. Identify Hurtful Self-Expectations
Steps: Write down common “should” or “never enough” thoughts.
Why it’s beneficial: Builds awareness of unrealistic internal narratives.
2. Reframe with Affirmations
Steps: Turn each hurtful expectation into a positive, realistic belief.
Why it’s beneficial: Reduces anxiety and increases self-compassion.
3. Use “Good Enough” Standards
Steps: Define what “good enough” looks like for a task or day.
Why it’s beneficial: Prevents perfectionism and burnout.
4. Anchor to the Present
Steps: When overwhelmed, ask, “What is the next right step?”
Why it’s beneficial: Reduces future-focused pressure.



6–8 Strategies

1. Challenge Absolutes
Steps: Notice words like “always,” “never,” “must”; replace with flexible language.
Why it’s beneficial: Interrupts perfectionistic thinking.
2. Align Expectations with Values
Steps: Identify your top values; adjust expectations to match them.
Why it’s beneficial: Creates clarity and reduces internal conflict.
3. Share Affirmations with a Colleague
Steps: Tell someone your affirmation; ask them to check in with you.
Why it’s beneficial: Increases accountability and support.
4. Use Mindfulness to Reinforce Affirmations
Steps: Pair an affirmation with a breathing practice.
Why it’s beneficial: Helps new beliefs take root.

9–12 Strategies

1. Examine Role Expectations
Steps: Clarify what is actually required vs. what you assume is required.
Why it’s beneficial: Reduces unnecessary pressure.
2. Reframe Productivity Narratives
Steps: Replace “I must do everything” with “I will prioritize what matters most.”
Why it’s beneficial: Supports sustainable workload management.
3. Use Evidence-Based Self-Talk
Steps: Ask, “What evidence do I have that I’m not doing enough?”
Why it’s beneficial: Counters distorted thinking.
4. Create an Affirmation Ritual
Steps: Repeat your affirmation at the start or end of each class period.
Why it’s beneficial: Reinforces realistic expectations throughout the day.

*Refer back to the Compassion Resilience Schools Toolkit
(<https://eliminatestigma.org/compassion-resilience-toolkit/schools/what-is-compassion-resilience/>) to
explore more resources and information*