

# #3 SELF-CARE SKILLS FOR TEACHERS



## What if teachers don't follow the rules?

*'My colleagues are driving me mad at school. Many of them are not wearing their masks and some who are wearing it, don't cover their noses making it completely ineffective. I get so upset and at the same time so fearful. When I ask them why they don't adhere to the regulations, they come up with excuses like 'It has slipped my mind'. Or 'It makes me feel too hot'. Or 'It's only us here', meaning the pupils are not at school yet. Why are they not taking this Covid-19 business seriously? Don't they realise they are putting us all at risk?'*

There are many reasons why people ignore rules and play down the seriousness of a situation. And not all of it has to do with them being pig-headed or irresponsible. Although the consequences of their actions might be irresponsible, that it is not their intention.

It is often a way to alleviate anxiety, suppress negative emotion and shield themselves from their fear. These are referred to as defensive reactions.

Today we look at people using **defensive reactions** as a reason for not obeying rules.

Non-compliant behaviour is often motivated by fear and a sub-conscious belief that if we keep doing things the way it has always been done, it won't be necessary to adapt to a 'new normal'. Sticking to what we know, our fearful self is saying and hoping, we will be able to halt any changes in our world.

## SELF-CARE SKILLS FOR TEACHERS: DEALING WITH DEFENSIVE REACTIONS

This is a phenomenon often seen in healthcare where, for example, a person with diabetes fully understanding the serious consequences, choose to disregard the dietary guidelines and continue life as before.

By not wearing a mask or not keeping to social distancing to protect against Covid-19, the non-compliant teachers may be 'rebellious' against the pandemic and hanging-on to the 'way we were' and the ways of the pre-pandemic world.

Acting defensively and moving away from something, usually means I am putting distance between me and some truth about myself, like being scared witless of the virus. It is a face-saving move.

When confronted with not wearing a mask, for instance, the last thing I want to do is discuss those feelings that underlie my defensive reactions. That is when I come up with excuses like 'I forgot' or 'It leaves me short of breath'. In other words, 'Don't talk about it, it frightens me'.

Acts of rebellion perform the role of an amulet or talisman protecting the person against the perceived threat and the anxiety and fear caused by the changes they have to make to navigate the new circumstances.

### **How can we help seemingly defiant colleagues work through their distress and embrace the changes required by the Covid-29 regulations?**

- **Avoid making inferences about the reasons for people's behaviours.** Keep in mind the context and their personalities. Defiance could be their way of dealing with anxiety and avoiding fear, or taking control of their environment and protecting their now out-dated self-concept. None of these are constructive ways of negotiating change but we do not always choose the most effective way to live life.
- **Use self-reflection** and encourage self-reflection among colleagues to better understand our individual reactions to change and fear. Remember, if my behaviour is driven by me not wanting to be seen as fearful or not wanting to experience the fear, it may lead me to hiding these feelings from myself and from others. It is only by reflecting on this that we are able to do things differently and adapt to changing circumstances.
- **Be kind and caring.** Some deal with fear by being overly compliant and other through deviance. Let's support one another to alleviate anxiety and fear.

**Take care**

**Erika**

**WhatsApp 082 824 0642**



**Teacher's Care**  
COVID19

**SELF-CARE SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS**