

## Blessed are the flexible

for they  
shall not be  
bent out of  
shape



*I don't want to do this. I don't want to screen learners. I don't want to measure their temperatures and I don't want to enforce social distancing. In fact, what I want to do is social distance myself right out of this Covid-19 situation! This is definitely not what I signed up to do when I became a teacher! I just don't want to do it!*

As lock-down is being relaxed, and we are back at work, we are beginning to get a sense what the new world of work will look like.

But not everyone is excited about this transformation having been thrust upon us. The general anxiety around the pandemic, the uncertainty of where all these adjustments will lead and people's general reluctance to embrace change, is taking us way beyond our comfort zones.

**We can be sure of one thing however, the way we work, not only in education, has changed and we are required to sharpen existing skills or learn new skills, fast and on the fly.**

And it is our soft skills in particular that we are relying on to build resilience and support us in dealing with change.

**Soft skills relate to those personal attributes, attitudes and awareness we bring to work.**

It includes competencies such as adaptability and flexibility, which Forbes writer, Bernard Marr has identified as one of the eight job skills we all need to succeed in the post-Covid-19 world.

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

The others are: tech savviness, creativity and innovation, data literacy, critical thinking, digital and coding skills, leadership and emotional intelligence.

According to Marr, the one who is “going to succeed in a post-corona virus-world will need to be able to adapt to ever-evolving workplaces and have the ability to continuously update and refresh their skills”.

**Psychological flexibility** refers to the way we:

- **Identify and adapt to fluctuating demands of a pressing problem like the pandemic.**
- **Negotiate with ourselves, other people and the changes in our workplace.**
- **Handle our discomfort with the unpredictability control or self-regulate our behaviour and emotional expressiveness at home and at work**
- **Allocate our mental and emotional resources to support our own wellbeing**
- **Shift the way we view the situation**
- **Apply problem-solving strategies to cope with the pandemic and its consequences**
- **Effectively managing our own stress to regulate the stress levels in class and among colleagues**
- **Manage our competing personal needs and demands with workplace expectations and obligations.**
- **Recoup from draining and traumatic experiences.**

Psychological flexibility is very important for our mental and emotional wellbeing as well as our personal and social functioning. According to researchers, people who show flexibility are less anxious and depressed than those who rigidly stick to coping strategies they have relied on before.

Being flexible:

- increases your energy levels,
- makes you more resourceful,
- makes you more self-reliant and
- improves self-confidence.

To be flexible we have to be open to our experience in both positive and negative situations however, complex and uncertain.

**When we remain open and adopt a problem-solving attitude, we learn more, see more opportunities, deepen social relationships, grow as people and above all find meaning in our actions no matter how overwhelming.**

**Bend to not break and take care.**

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