

MANAGING TEACHER WELL-BEING WHILE TEACHING REMOTELY

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Introduction

There is a lot of evidence to show that teaching is one of the most stressful professions – we have a lot of responsibilities and often long working hours. This is especially true during times of crisis or when teachers have to make significant changes to the way they work due to external factors. This guide explores some different ways that teachers can support themselves to improve their well-being.

Getting started

- Recognise that there are a lot of different things that can affect teacher well-being. These include stress and anxiety, physical health issues, work–life balance and financial or career security. Teachers might experience some or all of these in different ways at different times during their career.
- Different people will find that different things will work for them – try out various approaches to improve your well-being and encourage others to do the same.
- It can be useful to think of looking after our own well-being as part of our work. We have a responsibility to look after ourselves every day. Scheduling time to do this can be a useful approach.
- Focus on what is within your control – it can be useful to make two lists: what you are worried about that is outside your control vs what is within your control. For things *within* your control, decide what, if anything, you need to do to improve the situation.

Managing stress and anxiety

Managing stress and anxiety can be one of the biggest challenges to teacher well-being. Here are a few ideas for reducing this:

- Finding ways of calming the body can help some people – for example, using breathing or meditation techniques. Others find that being very active and ‘keeping busy’ can stop negative feelings and reduce stress levels. Try and find what works for you.
- For almost everyone, physical movement and exercise are very important. Scheduling time for this will help to make sure you remember to do it: you can think of it as ‘movement snacking’! If you’re working at a desk or computer for long periods, make sure you take a screen break at least every 60 minutes and move around.
- Find an activity which you enjoy that is completely separate from work – it might be cooking, art, a new sport, catching up with friends on a regular call, etc.
- Doing things for others has also been found to help people manage their own stress. We help people every day with our teaching, but are there others who you can support?
- Keep a diary of things that have gone well each day – try to write down between one and three things each day. This will help you to focus on positive rather than negative things.

Managing work–life balance while teaching remotely

Managing work–life balance is difficult in the best of times but especially when we are working remotely and the line between home life and work locations becomes blurred. However, there are a few things that can help:

- Try to be clear about your work hours and stick to them. It's very easy to keep going when you are working at home, but this can lead to increased stress in the longer term.
- Set up a designated place for work, even if it's just a corner of the room or the end of a table. When you finish work each day, pack up your things and 'close' the space. This will help you to separate work from the rest of your home life mentally as well as physically.
- Structure and routines can be very useful, especially for starting and ending the day.
- Usually when we are working in a school or college we have a commute at the beginning and end of our day. This also helps to separate work and home life. While working remotely, we don't have this time and space to move between work and home. If you can, try to recreate this by doing some physical activity either inside or around your home at the beginning and end of your workday.
- If you have children or other family at home, it can be useful to make it clear how available you are for interruptions during the workday. For example, if you are teaching live online, they need to know they cannot interrupt, but if you are marking work or planning lessons, it might be possible for them to ask you quick questions. Make it clear which level you are working at throughout the day.
- Be clear with parents and learners when you will be available for emails or phone calls. If you start answering questions outside of normal hours, you will get more questions!
- Some people find that spending five minutes at the end of each day to make a list of what they need to do tomorrow can help them switch off from work. Try it and see if it works for you.

Things to consider

- **We're all different:** Remember that what helps you to improve your well-being won't necessarily work for someone else, and vice versa.
- **Don't give up:** Some people need to try lots of different things before they find what works. Remember to be curious and keep experimenting – your well-being is important for you, your students and your friends and family!
- **Share well-being ideas with your learners:** They might find some suggestions useful.

Useful links

- Five steps to well-being from the New Economics Foundation and Mind: <https://bit.ly/Mind5Steps>
- A useful article on teacher stress and well-being by Marie Delaney: <https://bit.ly/TeacherStressWB>
- More information and resources on teacher well-being from Education Support: <https://bit.ly/EdSupportWellbeing>