

Staff Wellbeing Toolkit

We're Education Support, the only UK charity dedicated to improving the mental health of teachers and education staff.

Teachers and all education staff, every day you inspire the next generation.

But working in education has unique challenges — and there may be times when you need someone to be there for you and your colleagues.

In this toolkit you will find a carefully selected range of advice, tips and tools designed for teachers and education staff just like you.

Feel free to read them in order, or to jump ahead to any topic that resonates with you. We know this guide won't solve every challenge you face, but we hope it provides you with some additional tools and encourages you to think about how important your wellbeing is for you, and the children and young people you teach!

If at any point you need support, please call our free and confidential helpline. It's open 24/7 and offers immediate crisis support with a qualified counsellor:

08000 562 561

If you want to download more copies of this guide, scan the QR code below or visit educationsupport.org.uk/toolkit



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Reconnecting with your 'why'

Do you ever ask yourself “Why did I decide to work in education?”

Dr Shiri Lavy and Shira Bocker’s research shows that teachers and educators say their ‘motivations to become teachers include making a positive difference, being a role model, reaping the rewards of a fulfilling and challenging career, sharing their love of learning, and enjoying being and working with children’.

Does this resonate for you? If so, consider this reflective exercise, to help you connect with that motivation.

1 What inspired you to enter education?

2 What makes a day in school joyful?

3 Who was your favourite teacher or member of education staff as a child?

4 Think about the last time you really connected with a pupil or colleague at work? What encouraged that connection?

5 Can you remember the first time you helped a child have that 'lightbulb' moment or overcome a particular challenge?

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6 What makes you feel valued at work?

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7 What do you enjoy most about your role?

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Then, at a later date, sit back down and take a look at your answers again. Ask yourself:

- Is there anything that has surprised you?
- Has anything shone a light on any particularly joyful themes in your current working life?
- Is there anything you want to hold onto, or make more time for?
- Take a moment to read your answers aloud to yourself.
- Do they sound any different when you vocalise them?



The stress cycle: what it is and how to complete it

To prevent burnout it's important that our bodies don't remain in a state of stress for long periods of time. Which can be easier said than done when working in a high pressure environment like education!

To give our bodies and minds a break we need to learn to complete the body's stress cycle. The stress cycle starts when we perceive a threat. Something happens — maybe an inspection? — and the body sends out stress hormones.

We need to find ways to tell the body that we are no longer under threat, so it can stop producing stress hormones, and maybe even produce some feel good hormones! This can be referred to as 'completing the stress cycle'.

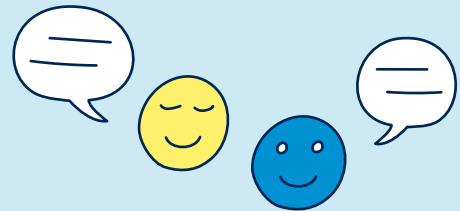
Here are seven evidence-based, and readily available, things you can try out.



1

Move

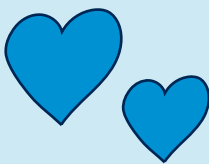
20-30 minutes a day is ideal, but anything is better than nothing, and it doesn't have to be marathon training.



2

Social interaction

Talking to colleagues can help boost our mood and reassure us that the world is a safe place to live. Laughing together increases relationship satisfaction and releases oxytocin.



3

Connect with others

A twenty second hug with someone you hold dear has been shown to lower stress levels as much as exercise. Simply speaking to someone with whom you share a special connection can make a huge difference to how you feel.



4

Breathe

Deep, slow breaths can help regulate the stress response. For a simple, practical exercise you can try breathing in to a slow count of five, hold that breath for five, exhale for a slow count of ten, pause for another count of five, and repeat.



5

Sleep

It can be difficult to sleep when we are feeling stressed. But getting a full, uninterrupted night's sleep wherever possible can be a great tool in the fight against stress.



6

Cry

There is no shame in crying! Crying may not change the situation that caused the stress, but allowing yourself to cry after a stressful event is proven to help by releasing feel good hormones.



7

Get creative

Engaging in a creative activity you enjoy today — whether it be music, art or sport has been shown to lead to more energy, excitement, and enthusiasm tomorrow.

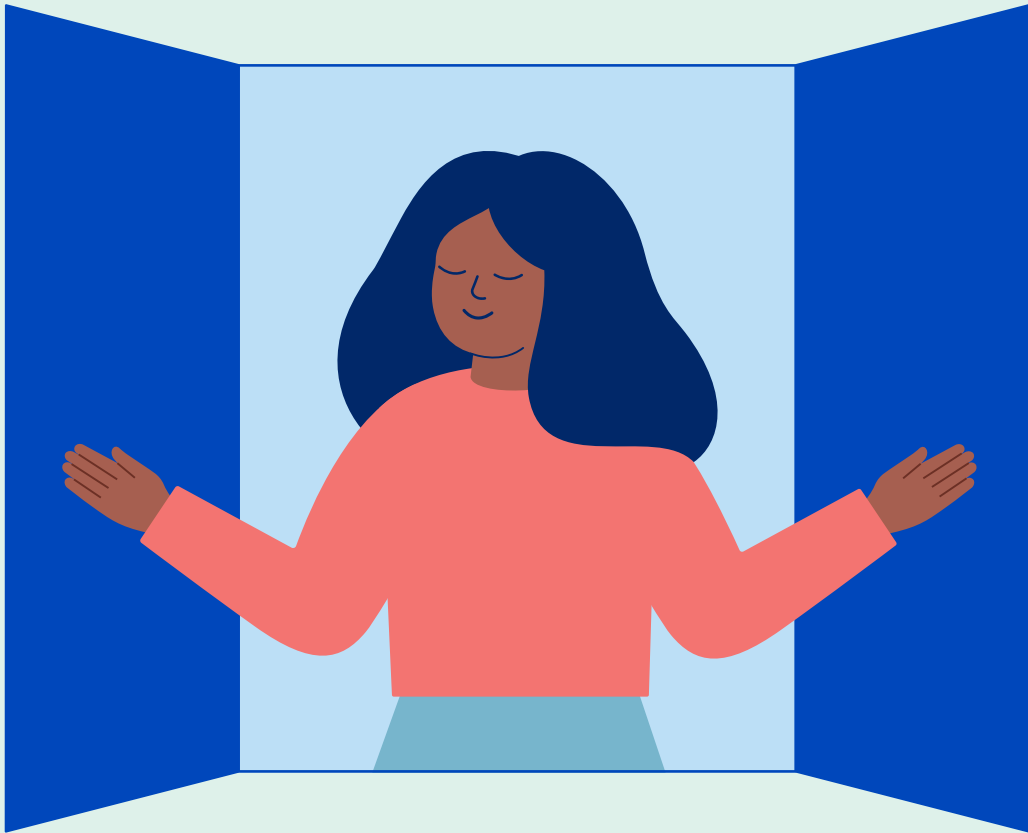


Wellbeing window tool

A tool that can help you prioritise taking time out during the day to stay well is the 30-3-30 approach. The suggestions below are grouped into things that take about 30 seconds, things that you can do in about 3 minutes, and things that might take 30 minutes or longer.

The 30 second ones are quick fix 'emergency' actions you can take if you suddenly find you are struggling to cope, whereas the others give you slightly longer to replenish.

Have a go at noting down some of your own suggestions and keeping them to hand or putting them up somewhere where you can see them throughout your working day:





Take a few slow deep breaths.

Breathe in, count to 3, breathe out, count to 3.

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Phone a loved one for a chat, leave or send a message if they don't answer.

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Try to move your body.

Go for a walk around the block or do some gentle yoga or stretches.

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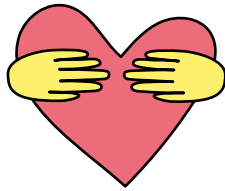
Avoiding burnout: top tips

There are many causes of stress in education that are out of your control, so responsibility for managing your stress should not only fall on you! We all need the support of our communities and colleagues at times.

But there are benefits to making the decision to proactively engage with your wellbeing. It can feel empowering, and often it can be the way to achieve the most immediate change in how you're feeling — you know yourself best, after all.

What can this look like?

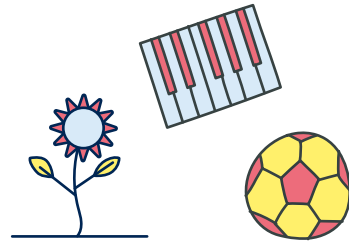




1

Remember that your wellbeing is important

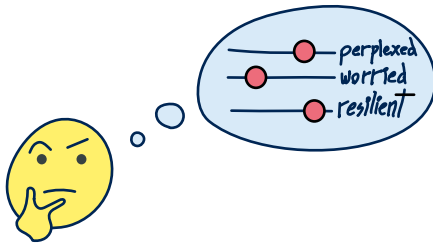
To be there for your students, you also need to be there for yourself. When did you last remind yourself that how you feel, and how you are coping, matters? Pause, get curious, and be kind to yourself.



2

Do things that make you feel like 'you'

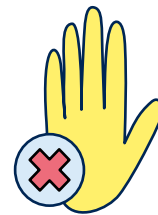
It might be a hobby, seeing or chatting with friends and family. It's important to remember that you are a person beyond your job. Engaging in our passions can energise us and help prevent burnout.



3

Be aware of your emotions, stress levels and mental health

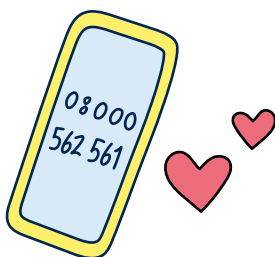
Connecting with how we feel and noticing our stress levels is really important. Being aware of your feelings is the first step towards finding solutions to stressful problems.



4

Accept when you need to say 'no'

Accept that you can't do everything and there are times when it is better for you, your health and your students to say no. Can it be delegated? Is it in line with your own professional priorities?



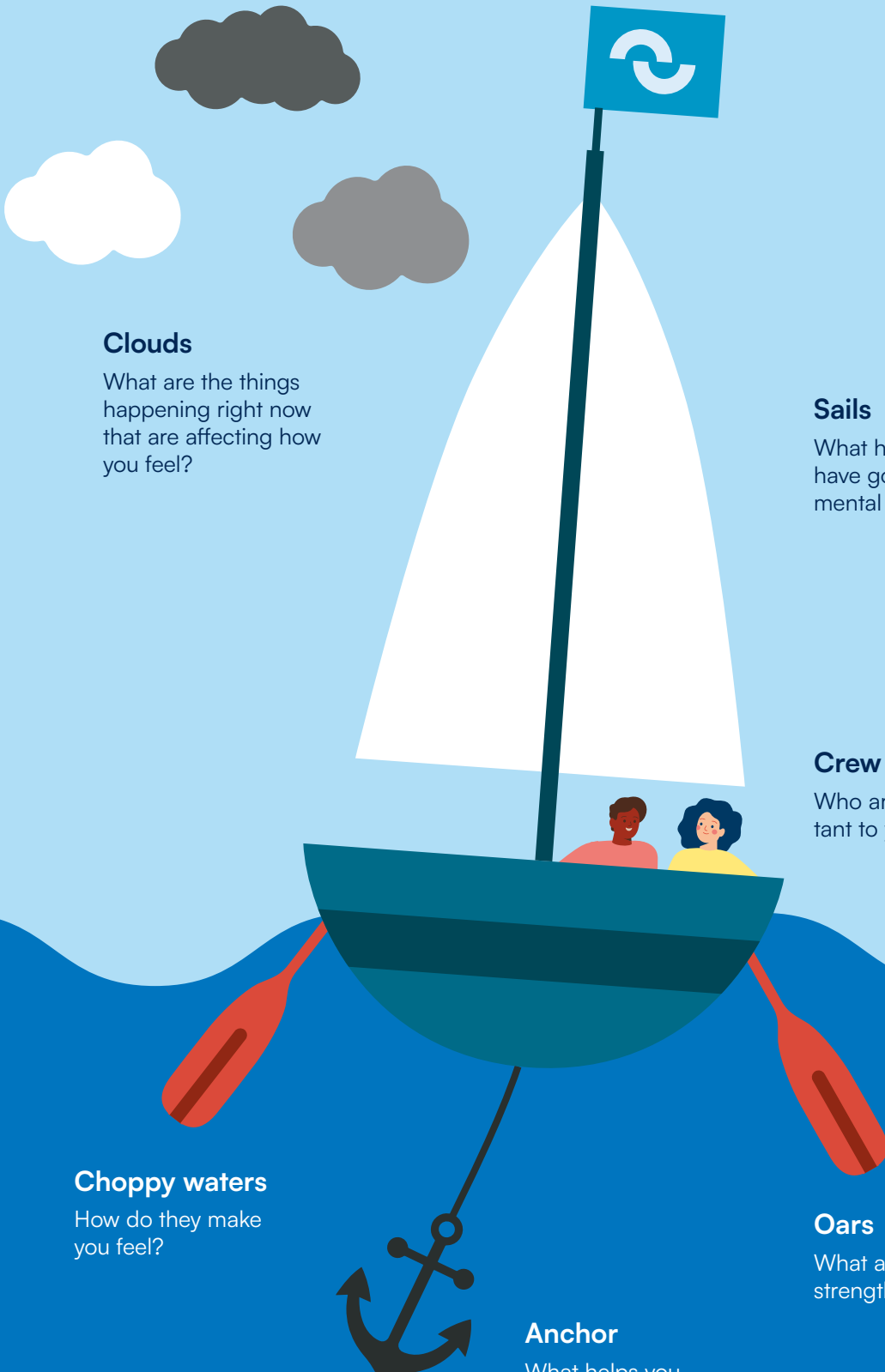
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Get support

You are not alone! Speak to colleagues, friends, family, or call our free, confidential helpline, staffed by qualified counsellors available 24/7 on 08000 562 561.

Set sail to better wellbeing

This tool can help you reflect on where you are now mentally and emotionally.



Clouds

What are the things happening right now that are affecting how you feel?

Sails

What helps us to have good mental health?

Crew on deck

Who are the people important to you?

Choppy waters

How do they make you feel?

Oars

What are your strengths?

Anchor

What helps you feel safe?

Clouds / Choppy Waters:

Think about all the things you may be worried about at the moment: this may be work demands, expectations and worries or out of school things such as relationships, health, isolation and bereavement.

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Oars:

What are your strengths?

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Anchor:

What helps you feel supported and safe? This may be family, school, a friend, colleague, supervisor or partner.

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Sails:

What are the self-care strategies that help you to have good mental health and a good feeling of wellbeing? eg. exercise, drawing, music, reading or simply doing nothing. (These are often the things we stop doing when under pressure.)

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Crew on deck:

Who are the people important to you?

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- Use the previous tool on challenging anxious thinking and apply it to the ‘**clouds**’. Are they as dark as you think?
- Consider your **strengths** and remind yourself of them. Celebrate them and feel proud of them.
- Knowing what makes you feel safe, ask, are you using this **anchor** enough? What more could you do?

- Are you filling your **sails** or allowing your worries to deflate them?
- Thinking about your crew at home and at work, are you asking for the help you need?

Make the most of your time

We know managing your time productively and coping with workload is challenging, and much of it is outside of your control.

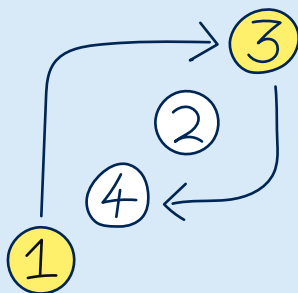
Whatever your role, here are some tips that could help.



1

Work out your goals

These don't have to be just professional. Family and personal goals are just as important — and they can be fun goals too! If you want to set a goal each week of dedicating time for a pamper session — do it! As long as your goal benefits you and boosts your wellbeing, it matters.



3

Prioritise the important tasks

Hate that feeling of having too many tasks and not enough time? We get it. Categorising them can help. Try grouping them into four categories:

- Urgent and important
- Not urgent but important
- Urgent but not important
- Neither urgent nor important

Clear your urgent and important tasks first, then concentrate on "not urgent but important" tasks. Remember — you can't do everything all at once.

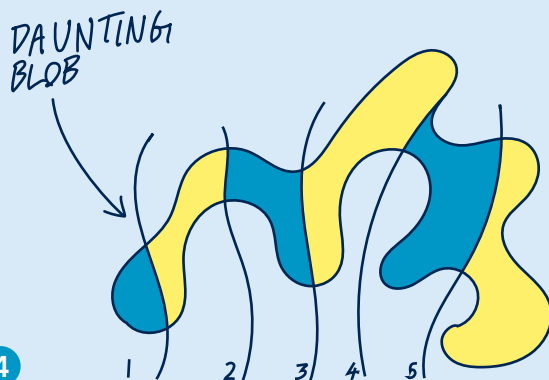


2

(Here's the really obvious one!) Make a list

Sorry, we know you've heard this one a million times, but it does start here!

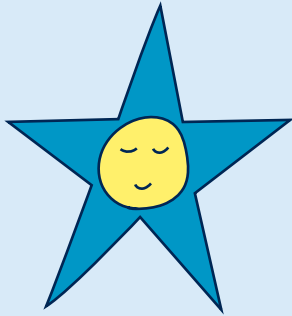
Get a notepad, diary, calendar or even the Notes app on your phone. Use this to keep a daily or weekly list.



4

Break tasks down into manageable steps

Hands up who gets put off tasks when they seem dauntingly large? Procrastinating can sometimes feel like your best friend. But you can try breaking it down into smaller steps — for example — do all of your books need to be marked in one go?



5

Recognise and reward your achievements

Yes, that's right — you deserve to praise yourself! Give yourself that pat on the back. Rewarding yourself for achieving your goals is a good form of self-care and promotes your wellbeing both inside and outside of work.

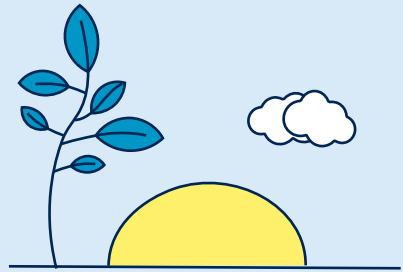


7

Taking breaks: a reminder!

You're not a machine — you need to take breaks! We can't function well if we don't have that time to recharge, relax and reset. So if you want to just sit with a blanket on the sofa and watch Netflix all day on the weekend— you do that!

We've got a Priorities Quadrant to help you keep on track of your tasks! See next page.



6

Value your time

Your time is valuable, and not all of it should be dedicated to your job. You're a human first, a teacher second. What things make you feel like 'you'? Factor those into your time, so that there's healthy balance between work and personal. Rest up ahead of (and after!) intense periods of work.



Priorities quadrant

The following template can be used to help you set priorities and establish balance in your role. You may choose to use it as a handy reminder or 'to do' list, or it may serve you better as a tool for organising your tasks in order of priority.





What are my current priorities?

Class

- Support plan previews
- Plan next week's science

Management

- Subject assessment data analysis
- Order stock for the resource cupboard

Home

- Clean bathroom
- Put boxes in loft

Wellbeing

- Knitting group
- Book a haircut.



Need support?

Remember, if you're struggling or need to talk, you can call our free and confidential helpline. Staffed by qualified counsellors you can call 24/7 on:

08000 562 561

Call us. We'll listen.

Please visit our website and social channels for more mental health support, resources and news.

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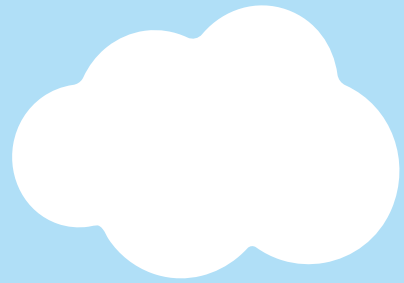
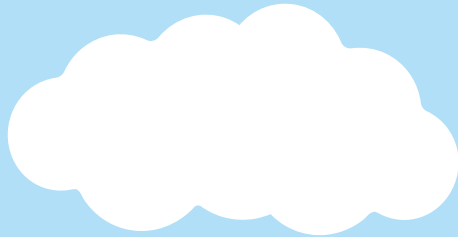


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Sources

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