

Leadership and Management

Staff well-being



A work environment that values and nurtures staff well-being can only be conducive to a healthy and happy workforce. For this to be possible, quality communication is key – and we must remember that not all communication is verbal. We need to apply the skills we have developed as practitioners in listening to the child's voice, to listening to one another and listening to ourselves.

Keep your cup full...

As a leader, it can at times feel as though this responsibility falls solely to you. It is important that you don't lose sight of your own needs and feelings. To be able to support the team's well-being, you need to ensure that you are maintaining a healthy level of well-being, finding a support system and coping strategies to keep your well-being cup full – you can't fill up other people's cups, if yours is empty!

TASK 1

How good are we at taking care of our own well-being?

It is important that we take to time understand and acknowledge how we respond to stressful/challenging/unpleasant situations and the impact they have on us as a person. Self-awareness can be instrumental in recognising triggers and identifying strategies for coping. Take a moment to think about you.

Step 1: Signs and indicators

Divide a piece of paper into 3 columns: Heart – Body – Head

Under each heading, make a note of how your body responds to increased stress levels

- Heart – note the emotional impact you feel e.g., tearful, panicky, anxious etc.
- Body – note the physical impact you feel e.g., insomnia, headaches, loss of appetite etc.
- Head – note how it makes you think or behave differently e.g., irritable, argumentative, forgetful etc.

You might find that your heart, body, and head react differently to situations that are considered professionally challenging as opposed to personally challenging. It might be helpful to have a separate piece of paper to note how these differ, just to help you unpick your responses.

Step 2: Triggers

List three things/situations that contribute to you experiencing the feelings above e.g., a parent becoming angry with you about a dispute over unpaid fees, a new starter that cries for prolonged periods of time, being too hot or cold, being reprimanded for failing to do something at work, increased workload, lack of autonomy etc.

This list is just for you, so be open to the process and really consider what it is that triggers your signs and indicators of your well being declining.

TASK 2

Coping strategies – helpful versus harmful.

Now that you have considered your triggers and how you respond to them, it's time to look at the coping strategies you apply as an individual. How do you take responsibility for your own well-being? Make a list of your 'go to' strategies such as treating yourself to a slice of cake, venting to a colleague, writing in a journal, having a long bath, confronting the issue immediately, avoidance etc.

Review your list. Are the strategies helpful to you? do they result in you feeling better or worse? For example, for some, talking out an issue can help them to gain a different perspective and find a solution. For others, it can lead to a pattern of negative thinking, focusing on the issue as opposed to a resolution.

Look at your recent experiences and place value on the strategies that help rather than harm.

TASK 3

Is the value of staff well-being promoted within your team?

What strategies do you apply to ensure that staff feel supported and valued?

Below you will find some questions to prompt your reflection.

- Do you have scheduled supervisions with adequate time to discuss how they are feeling?
- Is there an open-door policy to enable individuals to come to you when they feel ready?
- Can you offer flexibility in your approach – what do they need? Flexibility in their working hours, regular breaks, training, emotional support, or signposting etc.
- Do you ensure that staff have adequate time to decompress – minimising work calls/messages out of hours, limiting taking work home, being able to step out of the room etc.
- Do you ensure that you manage expectations of staff, providing them with clarity of their role and yours.

TASK 4

Well-being Warriors!

Consider having one of more WBW that could take the lead on promoting a positive workplace environment that centres around the well-being of the staff team. What might this role look like? Who has the skills and motivation to do the job well? Think about what would breathe life and energy into your team e.g., Feel good Fridays where lunch is provided as a well done for the week or planning an afterhours yoga session for staff to enjoy? Think about fun team building exercises, incentives for doing the job well, reward for achievements, competitions to inspire and motivate etc.

Further reading

<https://www.annafreud.org/insights/news/2021/07/early-years-staff-say-it-s-time-to-make-staff-wellbeing-a-policy/>

[resource 2 take stock of mh in your workplace final.pdf \(mind.org.uk\)](#)

[Whole school wellbeing with Tes](#) (whilst reference to school environment, is transferable to early years setting approach)

[Education staff wellbeing charter - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)