

Latest Research on Teacher Wellbeing – What Can You Do to Help Yourself This Year



A good school is not only built on good grades, but on a foundation of happy, motivated and healthful students and staff. There is a mutual link between the wellbeing of teachers and their pupils, meaning what makes teachers happy is likely to benefit students too, both academically and psychologically. However, there are numerous problems that can wear teachers down, and cause many to leave their profession within just five years' post-qualification. Recent research underpins the key factors that can have a positive or negative influence on teacher wellbeing, as well as ideas for strengths-based solutions.

Key Factors that have a Negative Influence on Teacher Wellbeing

Top Stressors for Teachers:

- ◆ Burnout – Long term stress and pent up anxiety can lead teachers to feel disengaged and unmotivated, causing vital teaching skills such as memory and focus to diminish.
- ◆ Negative self-perceptions – Education staff tend to face negative feedback that can damage their self-worth, and cause them to question themselves and whether they can ever be doing enough in their job.
- ◆ Unrealistic societal expectations – Nowadays, teachers are expected to do far more than just teach. This expectation that they should not only provide good quality education but also produce successful, responsible and confident individuals puts enormous strain and pressure on education staff.
- ◆ School violence – Managing physical and verbal victimization against students and staff can cause a great deal of emotional and psychological distress.
- ◆ Disruptive behaviour – Low-level continuous disruptive behaviour, while it is frequently dismissed and deemed irrelevant, takes a significant toll on teacher wellbeing, resulting in higher levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms than from violent behaviour.
- ◆ Poor student-teacher relationships – Teachers who have negative relationships with students can experience discipline related issues that can result in a mutual lack of respect. When taken personally, some negative comments from pupils can have a serious effect on a teacher's self-esteem.
- ◆ Impersonal relationships – Teachers are involved in around 1,000 interpersonal contacts each day; it's important that within those interactions, there is some element of trust and connectedness. If a teacher feels unable to disclose their thoughts and feelings to colleagues, particularly their boss, it can create a sense of isolation and not being cared for.

- ◆ Work-life imbalance – It goes without saying that teaching is a time-consuming job. Even with longer holidays, teachers still experience heavy workloads that are immeasurable in comparison to the time they have to relax and enjoy themselves.
- ◆ Bad portrayal in the media – There is something bad being said about everyone in the media. However, when teachers are constantly faced with unconstructive criticism, it can be hard to dismiss the feeling of being undervalued and excluded by society.
- ◆ Lack of affirmation – Going through each day without praise or encouragement can be disheartening and confusing, resulting in teachers asking themselves, “Am I doing enough?... Am I meeting my students’ needs?”.

Solution Focussed Strategies to Help You

- ◆ Take time to relax and unwind at home. Find what it is that brings you serenity after a long day at work. Whether it be practicing yoga, exercising or listening to your favourite music.
- ◆ Build positive relationships with colleagues. By offloading negative thoughts onto one another, you’ll find a stressful burden lifted off your shoulders and a sense of affiliation.
- ◆ Celebrate your successes. You deserve and thrive on praise like any hard-working student, so take a minute to reflect on times when you overcame challenges at work and remember how good that felt.
- ◆ Give praise and share your appreciation for those who make your life at work easier. With so much on your plate, it can be easy to look them over.
- ◆ Rise above the negative things being said in the media. You are valued, you are respected and you have earned the place you are at now. If you see or hear something that aggravates you, change the channel, mute the sound, switch it off.
- ◆ Become aware of your school ethos – what it means to you specifically, what you can take from its message and how you can pass it on to your students.
- ◆ Instead of allowing yourself to be angry over daily hassles and frustrations, accept them with constructive efforts to improve the situation.
- ◆ When faced with an angry student or parent, simply observe their discontent, try to recognise their feelings and empathise.
- ◆ When you feel trapped or bogged down with a heavy work load, talk about how you feel with your colleagues. It is likely they feel the same way, and you can reassure each other and even suggest ways of managing.
- ◆ Carry out some of the other strategies suggested in the Resources section of this website, especially on using humour for example.