

Improving Well-Being Starts With You

Resilience

Staff well-being is a massive issue. Teaching is often listed as one of the most stressful professions. However, “fixing” staff well-being is not easy and requires focused attention by school leaders, systems, school councils and most importantly staff themselves. Here are 11 actions you can take immediately to start improving your own well-being.

Take responsibility for your own personal well-being

Many educators put themselves last! They work long hours tirelessly trying to be all things, for all people. Looking after your own well-being needs to be a priority.

Undertake a thorough health appraisal every year

Early detection is better than pursuing a cure.

Replace the term *work-life balance* with *work-life satisfaction*

‘Balance’ can be difficult to achieve in a job where the work is demanding and has social impact. It is important that we get satisfaction from our work as well as the other aspects of our lives. Instead of aspiring for *work-life balance*, aim to get *work-life satisfaction*.

Set boundaries on your work hours

For staff working in schools, no matter how many hours you work, there is always more that could be done. It is vital to set boundaries to stop work overtaking and having an impact on the other aspects of your life. *Which day of the week could you leave school at 3.30 pm and do something for you?*

Monitor your self-talk

It is vital that you monitor that little voice inside your head and ensure that your expectations of yourself are reasonable. At times educators can be our own harshest critic. At the end of each day you should reflect on what you have achieved and not be too harsh on yourself if there are still tasks on your *TO DO* list. School days can be unpredictable with emergencies arising, sabotaging our plans and forcing us to reprioritise.

Prioritise ruthlessly

Time is a precious resource. It is vital that you use it well. Ask yourself often, *“Is this the most important thing I could be doing with the time I have available?”* A good way to feel that you are gaining traction is to identify at the beginning of each day, one important task that you need to make sure is completed that day, for that day to feel successful.

Book a holiday - every break

It is vital that you take some time each school holidays to rest and recharge. A holiday doesn’t have to be extravagant. Even if you only go away for a day trip or a night or two. The anticipation of the holiday can be almost as good as the holiday itself.

Establish and commit to an exercise routine

Exercise has benefits for both our physical and mental health. Often when people get busy and stressed, the first thing they stop doing is exercising. Yet exercising is the best thing they could do for their well-being.

Stop for lunch

We know eating well is important to looking after our health but we often skip lunch, eat on the run or at our desk. Take at least 15 minutes away from your desk to stop and eat.

Drink more water

We should drink at least 2 litres of water per day. This equates to about 8 glasses of water.

Seek expert help if feeling over-whelmed

If you are feeling over-whelmed, seek professional support. It is not a sign of weakness but a recognition of the real complexity of the role you play.

The only way to keep your health is to eat what you don’t want, drink what you don’t like and do what you’d rather not.

Mark Twain

Key points

Time for some tough love

Are you hooked on the adrenaline of being ‘busy’ and feeling needed?

Are your own expectations of yourself realistic?

Is your self-talk positive or are you your harshest critic?

Do you focus on the good aspects of any situation or do you always look at the negative?

Attitudes are contagious – Are you hanging with the right people?

Steve Francis MScM, BEd, DipT

www.SteveFrancis.net.au

Steve is an expert in school leadership and work-life satisfaction. Steve was a Principal for 20 years and is the author of four books, ‘Time Management For Teachers’, ‘A Gr8 Life...Live it Now!’, ‘First Semester Can Make or Break You!’ and ‘Attitude is Everything’. Steve lives in Brisbane with his wife and family but works with school leaders and staff in schools across Australia and internationally.

