

5

TEACHERS' WELLBEING



2 hours 30 minutes



Flipchart, markers and pens, two jars, set-up that makes it possible to display a video or listen to an audio file (if possible), Classroom Wellbeing Portfolios, [Handout 13: Conceptual Framework for Teacher Wellbeing](#), [Handout 14: Mindfulness Script](#), [Handout 15: Four Steps for Teacher Learning Circles](#), [Handout 16: Self-Care Plan Worksheet](#)



By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand how crisis can affect teachers' wellbeing
- Understand the effect of teachers' wellbeing on student wellbeing and learning
- Identify and practise self-care strategies
- Develop a (realistic) self-care plan.



Introduction




20 minutes



Paper, pens, markers, two containers




Individual, whole group

- ➔ Display the learning objectives for the session. Invite a participant to read them.
- ➔ Explain that participants will now play a variation of "Shooting Stars" (from the P.O.W.E.R. Game Bank).
- ➔ Explain that the game can be played with their students, but that it's also a good way to demonstrate their own feelings and coping mechanisms.
- ➔ Invite each participant to write or draw on separate pieces of paper two things that make them feel stressed, sad or upset and four things that make them happy, relaxed or feel better.
-  Create two virtual boards (or one with two separate areas) called "stressful things" and "happy things". Invite participants to add two items to the stressful things board and four to the happy things board.

- ➔ Set up a happy jar and a stressed jar. Ask participants to crunch their pieces of paper into balls, keeping the happy balls separate from the stressed balls, and take turns throwing the happy balls into the happy jar and the stressed balls into the stressed jar. If they enjoy competing, each participant can have one or two throws at a time and keep track of how many they get into each jar.



Skip this step.

- ➔ After throwing the paper balls, invite participants to randomly select one ball from each jar and read them out as follows: *"When I feel upset because of [stressed ball], I can [happy ball] to feel better."*
-  If possible, randomly order the list and invite each participant to read one item from the stressful things virtual board and one from the happy things board as follows: *"When I feel upset because of [stressed board], I can [happy board] to feel better."*
- ➔ Read out the remaining happy jar ideas as a group and ask a participant to write them on a flip chart.






➔ Reflect:

- Ask participants to reflect on a time when they felt stressed and it affected their ability to teach or complete their job.
- Ask a participant to share their experience and focus on what tools or techniques they used to manage their stress and take care of themselves.
- Explain the links between feelings (stress, frustrated, etc.) and behaviour (getting frustrated easily, having less patience, etc.).

Say, for example:

"When you feel (use the examples given by participants) and don't do something to take care of yourself it can affect how you are at work (use the examples given by participants). Stress can build up over time. It's like a cup of water that doesn't get emptied, but water continues to be poured in until it overflows. If we don't do things to take care of ourselves, it's not uncommon for these feelings to overflow and affect our work, relationships and lives. We'll talk more about how we can support our own and others' wellbeing."

Key Points

-  Stress doesn't only affect children. It can also negatively affect a teacher's ability to teach and plan and manage their classes.
-  Research has shown that when teachers feel stressed they're more likely to use harsh disciplinary techniques to control their students however they can.
-  Stressed teachers may feel more emotionally tired and find it more difficult to empathize with and engage with students, and build positive relationships with them. They may also find it more difficult to connect with their fellow teachers and engage in peer support, which can have a significant impact on their wellbeing.



Background/Theory: Effect of teachers' wellbeing on students



45 minutes



Flipchart/cardstock, markers, Handout 13: Conceptual Framework for Teacher Wellbeing



Whole group, four groups, whole group

➔ Explain or lead a discussion on why teachers' wellbeing is important.

Say, for example:

"How we feel affects everyone around us. This is especially true when we are in a position of power or influence, like as a teacher. As a teacher, how you feel can affect your students and the classroom dynamics in many ways.

Teacher wellbeing refers to how teachers feel and perform in their jobs. It is influenced by their emotions, attitudes, and assessments of their work, and is specific to their individual contexts.

*To better understand teacher wellbeing, it is pertinent to understand the various profiles of teachers working in crisis and conflict-affected contexts."*¹¹

For example, if a teacher is stressed, it will be more difficult to teach and be patient with students. If teachers preoccupied with their own wellbeing, it will be more difficult for them to notice any issues affecting their students. In these situations, students'

wellbeing and learning may suffer. On the other hand, if teachers have taken care of their own wellbeing and therefore are feeling well, they're more likely to be patient with their students, understand and accept their students' issues or distress, and calmly address issues that arise. Teachers are also better able to teach effectively and grow professionally when they're well.


➔ Give out Handout 13: Conceptual Framework for Teacher Wellbeing or display a slide showing the Conceptual Framework for Teacher Wellbeing.

- Explain that there are four areas that greatly influence teachers' wellbeing: 1) teacher self-efficacy, 2) job stress and burnout, 3) job satisfaction and 4) social-emotional competence. These are all influenced by individual factors, school factors, community factors, and the national, regional and global context. This means that each teacher's wellbeing will be different, even though everyone's working in the same general context and may work/have worked in the same schools previously.

If necessary, explain that self-efficacy is a teacher's belief in their ability to do their job and reach their goals given the situation around them. A person with high levels of self-efficacy may view challenges as something they can overcome. Someone with low self-efficacy may view obstacles as insurmountable, and that they have no control over the obstacles or outcome.




¹¹ Falk, D., Varni, E., Funder Johna, J. and Frisoli, 2019. *Landscape Review: Teacher Well-being in Low Resource, Crisis and Conflict-affected Settings*. Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), USAID and Education Equity Research Initiative. p.2.



- ➔ There are many factors, positive and negative, that affect teachers' wellbeing. For example, a positive factor might be supportive friends or colleagues, while a negative factor might be juggling teaching in person and teaching students online who are in different time zones.
- ➔ Divide participants into four groups. Give each group a flipchart and invite them to draw a table with positive factors on one side and negative factors on the other side. Each group will brainstorm and write down positive and negative factors that have an impact at one of four levels: individual, school, national, global. Remind them to consider the four components that affect teachers' wellbeing (teacher self-efficacy, job stress and burnout, job satisfaction and social-emotional competence).
 - Group 1: **Individual** level
 - Group 2: **School** level
 - Group 3: **National** level
 - Group 4: **Global** level
-  Divide participants into virtual breakout rooms for the brainstorm. If possible, provide each group with a virtual board to co-create their list of positive and negative factors.
- ➔ Bring all four groups back together and invite them to share what they brainstormed.

- ➔ Discuss as a whole group:
 - How these different levels relate to one another.
 - How we can support ourselves and each other to increase the positive and respond to the negative factors. What is within our sphere of control? (They can use some of the ideas in the happy jar, and the strategies they will learn throughout the rest of the session.)
 - What factors are within our control, and which are not? (Remind participants to focus on the factors that are within their control to improve their wellbeing.)
- ➔ End the activity by reviewing the key points of the discussion and explaining that they will now practise a few strategies to address their own wellbeing.

Key Points

-  Teachers' wellbeing consists of many elements, including: teacher self-efficacy, job stress and burnout, job satisfaction, and social-emotional competence.
-  Our own wellbeing is influenced by our own personalities and experience, your school, community, and the national, regional and global context around you.
-  To improve your wellbeing, focus on the factors of teachers' wellbeing that are within your sphere of control.



Practice: Mindfulness



10 minutes



Flipchart/cardstock, markers, guided meditations and mindfulness videos or Handout 14: Mindfulness Script



Whole group

- ➔ Explain that they will start by addressing individual factors, using mindfulness.

Say, for example:

"Teachers can manage their stress through mindfulness activities. Mindfulness is the intentional state of being aware and focused on the present moment and accepting the reality you're presented with. Mindfulness helps you to understand where stress originates and how best to deal with it. When we accept our circumstances, we can gain a new perspective and move forward in a positive way. Calming strategies that focus the mind and body can help us achieve this."

- ➔ Lead participants in a mindfulness activity. Use the script in Handout 14: Mindfulness Script or see page 106.

Mindfulness activities in several languages can also be found here:

- the UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center: www.uclahealth.org
- IRC Healing Classrooms Mindfulness: <https://youtube.com>



Invite participants to participate in the mindfulness activity and leave their cameras on. Share your screen with a mindfulness activity from a vetted mindfulness video or lead an activity with your camera on.

- ➔ After the mindfulness activity, lead a discussion:
 - How did you feel before the activity and after it?
 - How and when could you use mindfulness in your own life?

(Remind teachers that they can always take one or two minutes to breathe deeply during a class, and even practise breathing with their students.)
- ➔ Explain that mindfulness can help to improve their job stress and burnout, as well as their social-emotional competence. Although it doesn't address the broader community or systemic factors that contribute to wellbeing, it does address individual wellbeing.
- ➔ Give out Handout 14: Mindfulness Script and explain that this is just one example of a mindfulness script that they can use with their students.



Mindfulness Script

- ➔ Find a comfortable seated position or lie down on the floor on your backs if there's enough space.
- ➔ Now we'll take a few minutes to sit silently and visualize. If you'd like to, feel free to close your eyes.
- ➔ Begin by focusing on your breath. Put one hand on your belly and one hand on your chest. Breathe into your belly. Inhale (smell the flower) – 2 – 3 – 4. Exhale (blow out the candle) – 2 – 3 – 4. Continue to breathe slowly and fully feeling as your hand on your belly rises with each inhale and falls with each exhale.
- ➔ Let your back grow longer and taller, reaching your head to the sky (if you're sitting). Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth, feeling your breath relax your body.
- ➔ Imagine that you can see a light in front of your eyes. Bring that light up to your forehead. Allow the light into your head, filling your entire head with bright, warm light. Where this bright light exists, there's only room for happy thoughts. There can be no darkness. Feel as the light pushes out any bad thoughts. Only good thoughts are left in your mind. See the light moving down to your ears, so you can only hear good things. See the light moving into your jaw and mouth. Let yourself speak only good words. Let the light travel

down your neck and shoulders to your heart. Let your heart be filled with the light, so you can feel only good feelings. Feel as the light shines out from your heart and you're showering everyone and everything around you with love and good feelings. Feel as your whole body is filled with the light, so you're aglow with good thoughts and feelings. Think, "The light is in me, I am the light. I shine light on everyone and everything around me."

(Pause for up to one minute of silence, or as long as they're comfortable with.)

- ➔ Begin to bring yourself back to the present. Focus on your breathing – in and out slowly. Wiggle your fingers and toes. When you're ready, open your eyes if you closed them.

(Wait a few seconds until everyone opens their eyes and seems ready to talk.)

- ➔ Lead a discussion using the following questions:
 - How do you feel?
 - What was easy about focusing on the light?
 - What was difficult?
 - How could you use this in your life?



Practice: Social Support

 45 minutes

 Paper, pens, Handout 15: Four Steps of Teacher Learning Circles

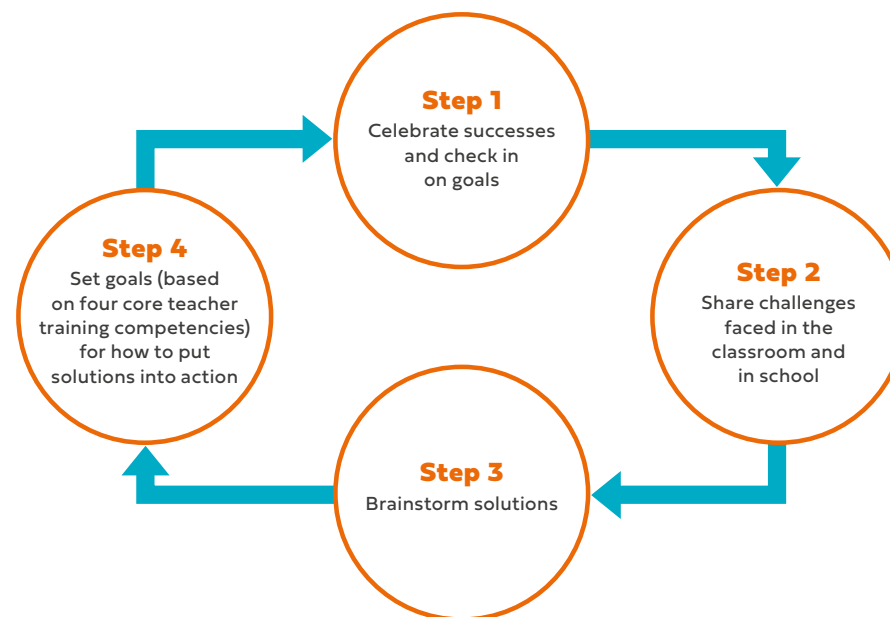
 Whole group

➔ Explain that, in addition to individual stress management, they can work with their fellow teachers to support their school and community through peer support groups (teacher learning circles). These groups can be created for in-person or remote sessions, for example using WhatsApp or other online platforms. This can address their self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and even job stress and burnout and social-emotional competence.

- Teacher learning circles are small teacher communities that learn from and support one another, with the ultimate aim of improving teachers' wellbeing and student learning outcomes. The groups reflect on current teaching practices and seek ways to enhance their instructional effectiveness.
- Building in **regular** time for teacher learning circles or peer support networks is important in order to provide teachers with the support and relationships they need.

- Teacher learning circles and networks should be a space where teachers can share challenges and brainstorm solutions. They should also be a space where teachers' successes are celebrated and where teachers can help keep each other accountable to their goals – both professional and wellbeing. They can also help keep teachers motivated by reminding them that they're not alone, and that their peers may also be encountering similar challenges.

➔ Display the four steps of a teacher learning circle and give out Handout 15: Four Steps of Teacher Learning Circles for participants to reference.



➔ Explain the four steps of a teacher learning circle and their purpose:

- 1) Open by celebrating teachers' successes and checking in on their goals. This serves as an opportunity to share wins – little or big – which teachers don't often have the opportunity for.
- 2) Share challenges the teachers are facing in their classrooms and schools. This provides both an opportunity to describe challenges and is also an opportunity for the co-creation of solutions to begin. In crisis and conflict situations, they also provide a safe space for teachers to discuss the community, national or regional factors affecting their lives and that both indirectly and directly have an impact on their teaching and wellbeing.
- 3) All teachers work together to brainstorm solutions to the challenges discussed previously. This can help to start solving teachers' problems, but also serves as an opportunity for teachers to form bonds and support one another.
- 4) At the end of the virtual or in-person teacher learning circle, teachers should set goals for putting the solutions into action. This provides accountability since they will need to report on their progress at the next teacher learning circle meeting.

Teacher Support Activity

- ➔ Remind them that all teachers have specific strengths and other elements of teaching they would like to improve on. Ask for a volunteer to share a strength that they have in teaching. For example, "I'm good at engaging students in group work". Ask another volunteer to share something they would like to improve on that's related to the strength that was shared. For example, "I'd like to be better at keeping my students' focused during lessons." Explain that this is an example of how they can learn from one another – by sharing their strengths and weaknesses.
- ➔ Give each participant three slips of paper. Each participant should write two strengths, each on one slip of paper, using the phrase "I'm good at..." On the third slip of paper, each participant should write one thing they would like to improve on using the phrase, "I'd like to be better at..."



Ask each participant to write these prompts on a virtual board (with their name) and invite all participants to look at each other's notes" as they finish writing.

- ➔ When they've finished writing, invite participants to walk around and look at one another's strengths and what they would each like to work on. Their task is to find someone who can help them with what they would like to work on and write down that person's name – and contact information if they don't already have it – to follow up and discuss how to improve. While they're mingling, they



should offer to share their strengths if they see someone who would like to be better at something they're confident in.



Participants should identify someone who can help them with what they would like to be better at. After they've browsed the notes, ask each person to identify who they'll go to and what for.

➔ After the mingling activity, lead a discussion:

- How did it feel to share your strengths with your colleagues?
- How did it feel to find colleagues who can support you with what you want to improve?
- How could you and your colleagues set aside time and space to support one another?

For example: Teacher learning circles, WhatsApp groups, meeting times, etc.


➔ End the activity by explaining that participants can address school and community factors by working together to advocate for the time and space that they, as teachers, need to address their own wellbeing and share teaching and other strategies to address the complex situation they are faced with. Peer support can improve their wellbeing across all four components:


- 1) Teacher self-efficacy – through peer support they can learn new strategies and become more confident in their teaching abilities.
- 2) Job stress and burnout – by learning new strategies for classroom management, organization and other pedagogical approaches, they may reduce job-related stress.
- 3) Job satisfaction – working closely with and enjoying the company of your colleagues can improve your job satisfaction.
- 4) Social-emotional competence – working with others improves cognitive, social, emotional and cooperation skills, and can also improve emotional wellbeing.



Practice: Organization

 20 minutes

 Paper, markers, Handout 16: Self-Care Plan Worksheet

 Individual, whole group

- ➔ A third strategy that can help to improve teachers' wellbeing is keeping themselves organized and creating a plan for addressing their responsibilities, both personal and professional, and also for self-care.
- ➔ Explain that now participants will create a self-care plan from Handout 16: Self-Care Plan Worksheet, that should include:
 - Routine strategies to keep themselves feeling well (e.g., peer learning circles, meditation, running, cooking with family, etc.)
 - Emergency strategies to address moments of acute stress or anxiety (e.g., mindfulness, breathing, walking away, drinking water, etc.)

- ➔ Remind them to consider all stress levels (individual, school, community, national, regional, global), and the four components of teachers' wellbeing (teacher self-efficacy, job stress and burnout, job satisfaction, and social-emotional competence). Remind them different factors will be more influential at different times.

Say, for example:

"It may be that your individual situation changes, or there are changes in the conflict that deeply affect you. This is normal. It's why it's so important to consider all levels and all aspects of your wellbeing, so you have strategies prepared for different moments in your life."

- ➔ Invite participants to create the self-care plan in a way that fits their needs and their schedule but ensure that it's a clear plan for taking care of themselves and their own wellbeing.

Say, for example:

"Focus specifically on what's within your control and what you can achieve. Not everything that could help you feel well will be achievable given the challenging and uncertain circumstances, but there are plenty of things you can do such as setting aside time for journaling or walks, etc."

- ➔ While participants are working, walk around and help anyone who is having difficulty coming up with strategies for self-care.
- ➔ After all participants have finished, invite them to share what they put in their self-care plans and discuss them with one another.



Conclusion



10 minutes



Individual Classroom Wellbeing Portfolios, markers and pens



Whole group review, individual drawing/writing

- ➔ Recap what you've discussed (ask questions of the group or invite one or two participants to provide a recap).
- ➔ Invite participants to take 5–10 minutes to add their self-care plan into their Classroom Wellbeing Portfolio.

