



TeachingEnglish

British Council: TeachingEnglish

A podcast series for teachers
of English



**Episode 9: How can I support
my own and my students'
mental wellbeing?**

Show notes



Episode overview

COVID-19 has affected so much of how we deliver education and language teaching. As schools (in some parts of the world) return to something approaching normality, it's important to consider the mental health impact of the pandemic. Confronted with other challenging issues as well, such as climate anxiety, students are looking to teachers for mental health support more than ever before. In this episode, we'll look at British Council set of activities created as part of its Connecting Classrooms programme. These materials help teachers promote wellbeing activities for both you and your students. In the second half of the episode, we speak to the teacher trainer, author and researcher Sarah Mercer and discuss how teachers can make their classrooms places where mental wellbeing is maintained, and even improved.

In this episode

So many teachers neglect their own self-care, focusing their time and energy on other aspects of their professional practice

People with severe mental health conditions die prematurely – as much as two decades early – due to preventable physical conditions

Positive teacher wellbeing is one of the key ingredients to being not just a good teacher, but a great teacher

Wellbeing is not an added luxury or an indulgence. It's ensuring that teachers are in that best space possible

Teachers become a lightning rod for all of those challenges

You can't put people in a classroom and just pretend that the rest of their lives currently and their pasts are not there

Classroom application

Think about your own practice

- What challenges do your students face in terms of their mental wellbeing? What support are you able to give them?
- How much do you think about your own mental and emotional needs? Are there ways in which you could look after yourself better?
- To what extent has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your classroom?
- Are there things which your school or institution could do differently to support the mental wellbeing of students and teachers?

The activities from the field report are below. More activities available in the [publication](#).

Teacher well-being

Is it possible for you to go on a staff meeting walk instead of sitting in the staffroom? Or to play some of the games listed here as a way of connecting with each other and doing something a little different and having a bit of fun?

Create a well-being jar; you'll need a jar and pieces of paper. Write an individual promise to yourself or the team, or a task on each piece of paper. For example, you could write down quotes that might inspire others, things you could do as a team to keep you motivated and energised, or challenges you are setting yourself for the coming year. Each week, a few of the papers are pulled out of the jar and posted on the noticeboard.

Teacher well-being tips

Spend time as a staff body thinking about new skills or activities colleagues are learning now or would like to learn. Create a board in the staffroom to share photos of learning in action! Think of a new skill the whole staff team could try. This could be something creative or maybe cooking-based, depending on staff interests.

2. Review a story

Choose a familiar story, such as a fairy tale or traditional tale. Ask pupils to use their understanding of well-being to track a character from this story.

Can the character see their 'happily ever after' all the way through the story? How does the character feel at different points? What can the character do to help themselves feel happier in different situations?

Explain that there are ups and downs in everyone's life. It is important to recognise these patterns in our lives and to work on helping ourselves to feel as good as possible, as often as possible.

Gratitude tree

Pupils each design a leaf with their response and display all the leaves on a class gratitude tree.

Gratitude book

Pupils make a tiny book (made by folding an A4 piece of paper lots of times) and record responses on a daily basis or make a class gratitude book.

Gratitude patchwork

Pupils write responses on squares of paper and then bring them together and display them in the form of a gratitude quilt to show interdependence and connection.

Social media

Please share your views about this episode, and the whole series on social media using the hashtag #TEBC. Let us know your thoughts, reflections, comments and whether you have been able to use any of the ideas in your teaching.

Detailed notes

Use these notes to find out more about the contents of Episode 8.

Phrase	Explanation and Further Information
Field Report: <i>Mental Health and Wellbeing: Staying Healthy and Resilient</i>	
Mental health and well-being: staying healthy and resilient	This report and book of activities can be downloaded here .
World Health Organization	WHO's primary role is to direct international health within the United Nations' system and to lead partners in global health responses. Visit https://www.who.int/ .
Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15–29-year-olds.	Click here for the sources which support this quotation.
Cwtch ... Eshra ... Nam jai ... Sobretaula	All these words and many more, can be found at the Positive Lexicography project, https://hifisamurai.github.io/lexicography/ .
Interview with Sarah Mercer	
Sarah Mercer	You can discover more about Sarah Mercer here .
Teacher Wellbeing (the book)	According to the publisher OUP , "This book serves as a practical guide for individual teachers, helping them discover strategies for nurturing and promoting their wellbeing. It also acknowledges the importance of contextual factors. Readers are encouraged to reflect upon their own practice and find techniques that suit them personally."

Glossary

The following words at the B2, C1 and C2 level (according to the [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages](#)) are used in this episode.

B2 words

additional
alternatively
anxiety
aspect
aware
backup
basis
belief
capacity
captures
cast
category
cause
claim
community
concerns
confess
constantly
consultant
contexts
cope
council
counter
critical
current(ly)
deeply
definition
deliberate(ly)
depression
dialogue
disability
emotional
emotion(s)
emphasis
ensuring
episode
expand
expectations
exploit
express
extract
flexible

focus
generosity
guaranteed
guilt
highlight
host
human rights
identity
ignore
impact
individuals
inspire
institutions
investment
irresponsible
joint
kindness
leads to
learner
literally
maintain
majority
mental(ly)
motivated
movement
nations
necessarily
nerves
physical(ly)
placed
potential(ly)
practical(ly)
presented
pretend
process
professionals
psychology
publication
reality
reflect
related
relevant
researchers

resource(s)
response
responsibility
restore
senior
settings
severe
shift
simply
slightly
soil
specialist
strategies
sufficient
suicide
tale
theme
throughout
treated
united
unrealistic
vary
vital
whereas

C1 words

addressing
alongside
boundaries
component
discrimination
duration
exceeding
feasible
happen to
indirectly
inevitably
initiatives
injustices
innovation
integral
integrate
labour

laid
motivating
neglect
nominated
notion
outcomes
outlook
perspective
publicly
realistically
related to
sector
self
selfishness
specifically
status
sustainable
triggers
undertaking

C2 words

advocate
allied
engage in
flawed
fundamental
fundamentally
heritage
implicit
individually
inequalities
interventions
irritable
practitioner
quotation
quotations
resilient
structural
trauma

Useful links

- [Teacher Wellbeing: A SMART Approach – a blog by Sarah Mercer](#)
- [Teacher Wellbeing: Finding Silver Linings with Tammy Gregersen](#)
- [ELT Together 2020 Language Teacher Wellbeing: What Educational Leaders Can Do Session](#)
- [Clare's ELT Compendium – Teacher Wellbeing](#)
- [Protecting teacher wellbeing at times of crisis](#)