

Wellbeing for Staff



This information sheet pulls together some of the most effective psychological advice to support wellbeing. It is designed to help you think about your wellbeing needs and acknowledges the importance of looking after yourself first, to enable you to support others. To that end, we would encourage you to consider where you are in relation to each of the blocks of wellbeing and if there are any areas you might target to support your wellbeing.

Once you are confident that your own wellbeing needs are being met, it can be used flexibly too, to model and support wellbeing conversations with children and young people, either individually or within groups or classes.

Human beings are biologically driven to be social and positive relationships are key to wellbeing. In addition to giving attention to your own wellbeing needs, as adults working in schools, you have an important role to model and support positive interactions with children and young people.

In your role, you will be aware that life can be challenging for many children, young people and families and there are times when they may be overwhelmed by the ups and downs they experience. Experiencing strong emotions is a normal part of growing up and the strategies contained within the wellbeing blocks are known to promote better wellbeing.

There are times when the needs of the child or young person are more significant and the staged intervention framework should be used to guide thinking about the most appropriate support required. It is also important to seek personal support from colleagues if required, to manage these more challenging situations.

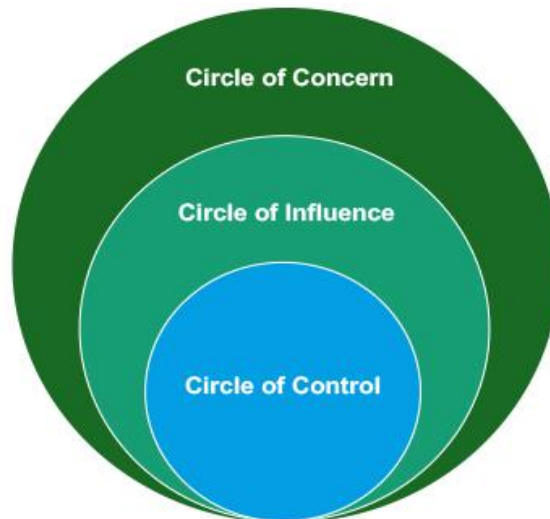
Kindness and Gratitude

Kindness is known to improve wellbeing and there are two key components to this, displaying kindness to others and self-compassion. It is sometimes easier to do the former and children and young people may need support to think about how to do this. Modelling kindness and compassion to others is a key role for staff in schools and discussing with children how to apply this to themselves will be important.

Gratitude is a known antidote to combat anxiety and low mood. Reflecting, identifying and naming 3 positive things each day is a useful health promoting activity.



Circle of Influence



Circle of Control - things we can directly control or impact through our thoughts, words or actions

Circle of Influence - things we can do something about. Although we can't control the outcome, we can have influence over it

Circle of Concern – things we have no control over

To support wellbeing we need to identify where we can make a difference and direct our attention, energy and actions to those things. This is our “Circle of Influence” and will help give us a sense of purpose and control. There are:

- things we can control - often our own behaviours, such as when we go to bed, whether we exercise, eat healthily, limit our social media use;
- things we can influence by how we act, behave and respond, which will make a difference - for example setting boundaries in our day can influence how we feel by giving us a sense of control over our work-life balance;
- things we have to accept - those things that we have very little influence over, such as government directives and exam results.

Connectedness and Relationships

Social connections and a sense of belonging are key to wellbeing. It is important to think about what you need to foster this for yourself, both at home and at school. When we are busy it can be easy to neglect our own needs, but it will be really hard to carry out your support role in school if you aren't also nurturing yourself.

As adults working with children, you may be aware of some young people who are struggling with this. If you feel that a child or family are isolated, it is important for a key member of staff to connect sensitively with them to offer support. Absence from school can sometimes indicate social isolation and a child or family who lack a sense of belonging within the school or community.

While access to social media is now inevitable and can be a positive support, it is not a substitute for face-to-face relationships and schools are in a good position to open discussion about the risks as well as the benefits of social media platforms.

Enhancing our Neurotransmitters

Our brains naturally produce "feel good" chemicals which can help to protect us from the effects of anxiety and other negative emotions. You can increase our levels of these chemicals by engaging in the following activities.

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| Dopamine: | Listening to music, relaxation, mindfulness |
| Serotonin: | Good consistent sleep, being outside, nature, laughter and comedy |
| Oxytocin: | Positive interactions with others, stroking pets |
| Endorphins: | Exercise and dancing |

This is useful to think about for yourself and building in times during the day for feel good activities helps keep your own energy topped up and aids your capacity to provide support to children and families.

Making a Plan

Predictability and routine are known to support a reduction in anxiety and in turn support wellbeing. Simple daily routines and structures, which most of you will incorporate into your days, without much thought, sometimes need to be planned more explicitly in times of higher stress.

Making a simple plan is a tried and tested way to reduce anxiety and the following key considerations will be helpful.

- Set realistic goals - don't over plan, keep things simple
- Have clear boundaries in place to support a good work-life balance
- Have routines in place to ensure adequate time for work, rest and play (this is important for children and adults alike)
- Don't be too hard on yourself if goals are not met but notice and adjust the plan to make it more manageable. Remember self-compassion

If moving beyond your own planning to supporting children and young people to make plans for themselves, they will need support to learn how to do this. But it is important to remember that they own the plan and the goals should be meaningful to them. It can also be helpful to identify potential obstacles that might get in the way of the plan and to problem solve around them.

You may wish to draw on your self-regulation training if you have had this, to incorporate self-regulation strategies and language.

Shaping our thinking and feelings

It is normal to experience strong emotions at times, and feel anxious, scared, unsettled or powerless. Taking time to name and acknowledge these difficult feelings will make them more manageable and help limit the experience of constant anxiety. This can be done by naming or acknowledging feelings yourself or discussing them with others. Talking things through with others can act as a buffer to make distressing or difficult emotions feel more manageable. Think about who can support you at home and in school to do this.

While making plans is helpful, it is important to acknowledge that difficult feelings may remain. If thinking about the past or the future makes you anxious, returning your focus to the present moment may be helpful.

Another strategy is to check yourself if you are having pervasive negative thoughts (red thoughts) and then to practice replacing with positive (green) thoughts, eg Red thought, such as, "I will never get through my to do list" -, catching this and replacing with a Green thought, such as, "I am expecting too much of myself and if I prioritise it will feel more manageable"

Revisiting key messages of resilience also helps in reframing our thoughts, being optimistic and giving hope for the future:

- This won't last forever; things will get better.
- Don't be afraid to ask others for help and support.
- Remember everyone faces challenges from time to time, not just me.
- Keep things in perspective - this is tough but I can be thankful for the good things in life.

Further support for staff wellbeing can be accessed here:

[Employment information - Wellbeing - Perth & Kinross Council](#)

Wellbeing for Staff



The Educational Psychology Service are there to support your and others' wellbeing. Please do not hesitate to get in touch:

Tel **01738 476242**

Email **EdPsychologists@pkc.gov.uk**

For further information - follow us on X **@PerthEPS** and use the **#buildingwellbeing**

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