

MENTAL HEALTH BULLETIN

Resources and Trainings

What About Us?

School Mental Health Is Not Just for Students: Why Teacher and School Staff Wellness Matters*

*Excerpted from article by Nancy Lever, Erin Mathis, and Ashley Mayworm. Full article available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6350815/#R6>

The term “school mental health” is typically used to discuss the mental health and wellness of students. However, school mental health also includes promoting the well-being of school-based educators, administrators and mental health workers. According to the American Psychological Association’s annual Stress in America survey, 60 percent of individuals residing in the United States in 2014 reported that work was a top source of stress in their lives (APA, 2015) and stress-related disorders are associated with numerous negative mental and physical health outcomes for workers (APA, 2013). Individuals working in school settings are particularly vulnerable to work-related stress. Furthermore, the American Federation of Teachers (2015) found that 78 percent of teachers reported feeling physically and emotionally exhausted at the end of the day. The stress that educators experience affects their enthusiasm about the profession and longevity in the field.

School based mental health providers, teachers and other caregivers play a critical role in helping children cope with crises. Following a crisis, teachers are often required to provide additional support to the students in their classes. While teachers provide daily care and support for their students, after a tragedy these demands may go well beyond their training or expertise. In addition, crisis responders and mental health professionals are tasked with providing crisis intervention and additional mental health support to the school community following a crisis event.

Although all stress cannot be eliminated in the workplace, research has documented some best practices and strategies that can help reduce the extent and impact of stress.

Care for the Caregiver

The National Association School Psychologists (NASP) developed these resources to help educators support the mental health needs of their school community.

Care for the Caregiver: Guidelines for Administrators and Crisis Teams

- ◇ [Mitigating Psychological Effects of Lockdowns](#)
- ◇ [Trauma](#)
- ◇ [Addressing Grief](#)
- ◇ [Anniversaries of Traumatic Events: Guidance for Educators](#)
- ◇ [Memorials](#)
- ◇ Care for Caregivers: [Tips for Families and Educators](#)

[Why Teacher Self-Care Matters and How to Practice Self-Care in Your School](#) (Excerpt from [Waterford.org](#))

Because teaching is such an intensive job, educators can greatly benefit from learning about and practicing self-care. In fact, practicing self-care can be in the best interest of everyone in your classroom. Self-care is all about taking care of your health and making sure that you have everything you need to thrive as a teacher. Without taking care of yourself, you won’t have the energy to help your students. Self-care can keep you at the top of your game and ready to handle any challenges that come up during your teaching career.

Free Webinars

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network:

- ◇ Well-Being Wednesdays: [Taking Care of Educators Who Take Care of Kids](#) | Mid-America MHTTC
- ◇ Monthly at 10-10:30am PT / 1-1:30pm ET, October 2020-June 2021: [Recruitment and Retention of School Mental Health Providers](#) | Southeast MHTTC



Video – Self care

Please take a few moments to view this wonderful video [Lessons from Teachers of the Year – 2020](#) and how they practice self care.

Take a Brain break

Breaks during distance learning and socially distanced classrooms

We have all been learning in new ways since the coronavirus pandemic began. If we are doing distance learning, we may be sitting in front of a screen for many hours each day. If students are learning in school, there may be rules for social distancing that do not allow them to move around like they normally would.

All of this makes it hard for us to pay attention and stay on track — especially those who learn and think differently. Individuals with ADHD in particular may struggle. [Brain breaks](#) and games can help.

Here are some breaks and games you can try both in school and at home. They can help us clear our minds, move our bodies and stay more engaged in distance learning.

- ◇ Take a movement break or play a game on GoNoodle.
- ◇ Do some body-brain teasers. For younger kids, challenge them to rub their bellies while tapping their heads. For older kids, ask them to wink with their right eye while snapping their left fingers. Then switch.
- ◇ Do some [mindful coloring](#) or drawing.
- ◇ Do [chair yoga](#).

Tips to help get you started

- ◇ Keep brain breaks to under 5 minutes.
- ◇ Use a countdown timer so kids know when it's time to get back to schoolwork.
- ◇ Ask kids to share their favorite brain breaks.
- ◇ Create a master list of brain breaks and every day pick two or three that kids can choose from.
- ◇ If you're an educator, read about [best practices for using brain breaks](#) and [explore this bank of brain breaks](#) to use in the classroom.

5 Tips To Support your Mental Health



1. Putting Your Oxygen Mask First!

When you fly on an airplane, the flight attendant instructs you to “put your oxygen mask on first,” before helping others. ... Because if you run out of oxygen yourself, you can not help anyone else with their oxygen mask.

2. Have a Good Work/Life Balance - Take it day by day.

Be kind to yourself, do not add more to your plate; be proud of what you accomplish every day.

3. Switch Off Your Email.

Being available online 24/7 can open you up to communications that can leave you excited or stressed about work, which can shift the mood of your whole weekend. It is important to set yourself a ‘switch-off’ time. Ensure that students and their families know that you will not be available but that you will get back to them as soon as your work week begins again.

4. Set Realistic Expectations – It is okay to Say ‘No’

People will understand!

5. Choose One Activity For Yourself A Week

Choosing an activity just for you one day a week can help you disconnect from work stresses. Taking up yoga, meeting a friend for coffee or taking a walk through the neighborhood are all simple ways to decompress from your busy week.

Mental Health Apps

Calm: a meditation and relaxation app behind the [Calm Schools Initiative](#) which offers teachers access to exercises as well as an [On-Boarding Package](#) (pdf) to introduce mindfulness.

Headspace: a mindfulness app that has partnered with [Teach for America](#) (TFA) to be available for TFA corps members and alumni for free by registering with an @tfacorps.org email address.

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