

NELSON PRINCIPALS ASSOCIATION WELL-BEING IDEAS AND STRATEGIES

PART 1: From lists generated on 8 June 2017 at Whenua Iti of "no-brainers" (commonsense, self-evident, obvious, clearly true and requiring no proof or explanation.

PART 2: From the 16 responses to item 4 in the questionnaire: **What's Worked For You?** (strategies and practices you've used to successfully support your wellbeing/hauora in your role.)

PART 3: From *EVEN UNDER PRESSURE* and EncourageMentors.com

In matters of self-leadership, self-management and self-care, what is good practice is usually simple "common sense". However, what is "common sense" is very often not common practice and "simple" is not the same as "easy". [EncourageMentors.com]

PART 1: "No-Brainers"

We do not err because the truth is difficult to see.

It is visible at a glance. We err because this is more comfortable." Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

Learn something new (e.g. piano)

Find another interest

Take 45 minutes away from school or the office

[Apply] strategies for slowing down a problem

self – awareness of your [attitudes?] etc

{Remember} it gets easier with age!

Balance proactive with reactive.

[Take] three belly breaths

Live above the line

Keep above the line

Ask to help

Swallow that frog

Asking colleagues to share resources and wisdom

Good sleep and making time for it

Ticking off the important before it becomes urgent

Buying time

Closing your door/working off-site to clear backlog

Drinks on Friday

Accept everything for what it is – it happens, not judging, non-emotional, then deal [with it]

Mahi ngatahi (work together)

Move slower to see more

"Self-responsibility begins with the recognition that we are responsible for our own lives and happiness. This requires our willingness to generate all the causes of all the effects we wish to experience.

"If I am unwilling to take responsibility for the attainment of my desires, they are not really desires—they are merely daydreams."

[Nathaniel Branden]

What can I outsource?
What is my time worth?
Who could do that more effectively?
Could not should
Empowering others – share the load/love
Yell! at children - anyone!
Lifestyle choices – special places away from the kura
Active recreation - MTB/walking/sport . . .
Managing for yourself . . . Contact out of hours – what works for you
Collegiality –COLS/Clusters
Do what you have to do! Just do it! Or not!
Share, unload, phone a friend (find one)
Laugh
Time out . . . Sabbatical
Pub
Sex
Do something you enjoy
Have fun
Keep a good group of 'friends'
Block out non-negotiable time
Time block work-space.
Be informed (rules/law etc)
Exercise
[Keep] realistic expectations of self
Prioritise tasks (Quadrant)
Push back
Find your happy place
Accept your job
Breathe
Do Dump Delegate Delay
Keep good collegiality
Turn your phone off!
Control your schedule
Create apace/time to respond to requests

"The victim mindset dilutes the human potential. By not accepting personal responsibility for our circumstances, we greatly reduce our power to change them."

[Steve Maraboli]

PART 2: From the 16 responses to item 4 in the questionnaire: **What's Worked For You?**
Strategies and practices you've used to successfully support your wellbeing/hauora in your role.

- a) By switching off totally. Leaving the work behind even if unfinished [. . .] home to watch t.v., have dinner with family.
- b) Go back to the classroom and teach - to remind me of why I am in schools and working with our children. Or - I go home, hug my children and play with them, and hug my wife.
- c) Exercise in the morning. Hard exercise that makes you tired.
- d) Interacting with others who are positive and enthusiastic about their role.
- e) Colleagues at the end of a phone who are prepared to listen and advise - brilliant, been my saviour on a number of occasions.
- f) Being organised and well planned.
- g) Sometimes exercising - bike ride into the wilderness or local trail.
- h) Being engaged in workshops that focus on the future and opportunities to make a difference.
- i) I love to cook and enjoying doing gardening and menial household chores.
- j) My Board pay for my professional supervision and this has been highly successful. It's a place for me to process personal and professional matters and work out how to integrate effectively.
- k) Managing my physical fitness.
- l) I've sought the advice of a health and nutrition life coach [. . .] Changed my diet by cutting out processed foods, caffeine and high carbs. [Further details here . . .] I am able to sleep and am feeling less anxious as a result. Part of this is to look at the triggers for raised adrenaline, anxiety and sleeplessness. [. . .] feeling better already and less stressed when faced with crises. Can cope without adrenalin pumping. Am beginning to feel better focussed but with the overwhelming demands I still feel swamped most days.
- m) The writing of Eckhart Toll, "The Power of Now", which is mindfulness-based and really helpful/valuable.
- n) I can sense when my adrenals start to give and have strategies for resetting them which includes EFT (Emotional freedom technique – tapping) and Neuro-link – sounds a bit way out but it really works! I also run mindfulness classes at the school; this gives me an opportunity to be mindful and slow down in my own setting.
- o) Ignoring things that do not need to be noticed.
- p) Thinking and reframing positively.
- q) Regular exercise and prioritisation of tasks/daily schedule really helps me to manage stress levels. Also having [. . .] children who have to be picked up and cared for means a scheduled switch off from work for at least a couple of hours a day.
- r) Making sure to step away from the laptop and constant emails to spend time talking with teachers and students - celebrating the positives.

- s) Prioritising and finding time to plan ahead.
- t) I walked the Camino de Santiago last year and so I often reflect back on that and that helps to keep things in perspective!
- u) Always prioritising exercise.
- v) Getting positive feedback.
- w) Connection: When I feel strung out I'm now aware that I'm craving a connection of some kind – be it with nature, another person, or with my feelings. I am now able to slow down and ask myself what it is that I need. It's always one of these three things. I think it's mainly about giving myself time and space to process.
- x) Weekends ! Chat to other Principals / Colleagues/ Spouse/ Whanau support.
- y) "Distributing leadership" through operational strategic plans. Staff develop plans that link to the school charter and goals and 'own' their area, e.g, - English, ICT, assessment, PLD
- z) Not checking my emails at weekends.
- aa) Physical activity, being very boundaried with social events/outings, social media, screen tie, alcohol, food and water intake! I work on a very fixed routine during the week and ensure that I exercise daily (even if it's a quick run before a meeting) and drink enough water. I drink [alcohol] a very limited amount and only on a Friday or Saturday as I find even a glass of wine can lead to me feeling very strung out the next day.
- bb) Promoting whole staff wellbeing and whole school wellbeing – this has helped a lot of us to reset and prioritise our wellbeing. From being a fairly sedentary staff, we are now all doing physical exercise and activities. I've also promoted that our staff do enter challenges and races etc, and acknowledge that by giving them leave to do so. This has had a hugely positive impact on our staff wellbeing and life balance – and has led to barely any sick days. I think by giving staff time out to do something physical that they enjoy, they are less likely to burn out. I do the same for myself and our board see our wellbeing as a priority.

We let the urgent crowd out the important and that's why many organisations are on a perpetual and ever-faster spinning treadmill of operational issues.

[Jim Clemmer]

PART 3:

Manage your energy¹

- 1 Discover which of your activities increase your personal energy. Do more of them. Spend less time on or avoid activities that drain your energy.
- 2 Spend sufficient time on the activities you most deeply enjoy; those that refresh and renew.
- 3 Check your expectations of yourself, others and your circumstances. How realistic and reasonable are they?
- 4 Set and hold limits on those activities (yours and others') that don't produce useful results and benefits.
- 5 Plan a vacation or at least a few extra non-work days for the times of the year you usually get sick.
- 6 Arrange to receive encouraging, inspirational or calming e-delivered emotional health reminders, "thoughts for the day" or "ideas for the week". Place the task of reading them within your *Always important and should never become urgent* priority-management category.²
- 7 Unsubscribe from media that report and encourage complaining-without-action, attacking, criticising, fault-finding, *awfulising* others' behaviours or characters, aggravating conflicts or otherwise re-heating negativity.
- 8 Limit time spent worrying and fretting about interpersonal conflicts. Clarify the problems and deal with your own part in creating them. Learn skills to confront others constructively and without drama, face-to-face.
- 9 In the micro-gaps between everyday tasks, pause and be completely still for 30 to 90 seconds and take some deep breaths.
- 10 Train yourself to become still, within whatever time you can regularly get off the treadmill.³ For example, try giving 70% of your attention to your out-breath - its sound, volume, pace, temperature and direction. Whenever you notice your attention wandering, gently and without judgement return to the process. Do this with your eyes open or shut, seated or standing, often and long enough to gradually discover that you can limit or modify some aspects of your thinking - especially obsessive thoughts.
- 11 Take meal-breaks away from your workplace. If you have company, agree not to discuss "work".
- 12 Pause, between switching from one task to another and take three deep breaths. Ask yourself *How am I breathing right now? How am I feeling?* Then, *What do I need in this next moment?* Act on the answer.

*I **always** have a peaceful preference. But I have to be still enough to know it.* Hugh Prather.

¹ Extract from Chapter 3, EVEN UNDER PRESSURE, Tom Watkins, 2017.

² I find useful resources for strategies such as these at www.todoinstitute.org and www.theenergyproject.com.

³ Tony Schwartz (theenergyproject.com) and others have shown that practices like this actually increase personal productivity.

Normalise constructive conversation about stress⁴

Admitting vulnerability from personal stress can be difficult for many people, especially when they are members of a fundamentally competitive workforce in hierarchical organisations. To do so can be seen as admitting a lack of “what it takes” or in some way breaking an unstated code of conduct. There may be indications, based on observations of colleagues and leaders, of an implicit directive: *Don't mention it. Get used to it. It's part of the territory. It goes with the job.*

While happy to admit superficial complaints and anecdotes about stressful situations and the pressure of work, many people conceal the truth when the truth is, *I'm close to burnout and meltdown.*

For these reasons, forums designed to safely and constructively examine and discuss how we experience and exhibit stress, respond or react to stress in others, and what we know we need to do to reduce it, can be helpful. They can reduce inhibitions to acknowledging reality and prompt the design of support strategies.

So too can the provision of coaching and counselling support from **external** providers. Leaders should, I believe, provide workers with opportunities to participate in these opportunities, provided they are constructive, sufficiently safe and conducted professionally by competent practitioners.

Coaching, supervision or counselling support can encourage individuals to actively monitor and reduce their stress levels, acquire new personal coping mechanisms and better respond to stressed colleagues, especially by recognising that irregular or peculiar behaviours may represent calls for help. They can reduce the isolation some people experience in coping with stress as they discover, *It's not just me!*

A pre-requisite of openness is trust, which is why off-site discussions led by a neutral facilitator are often helpful. As with most other workplace practices, leaders' modelling of openness about stress is crucial and highly influential. If they are secretive about their own stress levels or don't experience stress at unhealthy levels at all, it may be difficult to make the matter a legitimate topic for open conversation: honest self-disclosure of vulnerability is an important factor in developing trust in relationships.

In the absence of those or other official initiatives, take whatever individual initiatives you can, one-to-one with a colleague, an external coach, professional supervisor, counsellor, health-care practitioner or therapist.

Further discussions (at [Resource Library](#), www.EncourageMentors.com)

- First, step off the treadmill.
- Got a minute?
- Why delegate? Why not?
- Encourage!
- Facing reality.
- It's terrible! Let's co-ruminate.
- 13 ways to encourage the heart.
- Choose how you respond to pressure, disruption and uncertainty.
- IN and ON the business, misunderstood.
- Sharpen up your priority management.

⁴ Extract from Chapter 3, *EVEN UNDER PRESSURE*, Tom Watkins, 2017.