

Be You In Focus Webinar Transcript

Preparing for 2021: Thriving in the aftermath of 2020

Presented by Louisa Ellum

Louisa Ellum, Beyond Blue

Hello everyone. My name is Louisa and I'm Head of Major Projects at the By You team at Beyond Blue. I'm a former educator, and also an educational leader.

As we get started now, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands and waters throughout Australia, and pay respects to Elders past, present, and emerging. I'm joining us today from Melbourne, Victoria, so, I'd like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. As we gather online today, from all across the country, I invite you all to think about which lands you're joining us from and reflect on what connection means to you. On behalf of the Be You team, we recognise the importance of continued connection to culture, country, and community, and to the health and social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, and their families. We continue to imbed Aboriginal ways of being, knowing, and doing, in all of our Be You practices.

You may have seen some similar information as you were waiting to join the webinar today, but few reminders before we get into our planning for 2021 content. We recognise you already come with a lot of expertise and knowledge today, and encourage you to get involved and share with others. We hope to respond to as many of your questions as possible today, especially in a dedicated Q&A time towards the end of the session. So, please comment and ask questions as we move along. You'll also be provided with a certificate of participation for attending today.

I'm going to talk to you for about 20 minutes before being joined by our panelists from Early Childhood Australia and headspace and opening up for discussion and questions from you for the second half of the session today. And we'll finish at five o'clock Eastern Australian Standard Time. So about Be You. Be You is the National Mental Health and Education Initiative.

It's delivered by Beyond Blue, in collaboration with Early Childhood Australia and headspace. Be You equips educators to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people from birth to 18 years.

Be You helps you involve everyone at your early learning service and school in supporting mental health, so you achieve the best possible outcomes.

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With all of the changes and challenges of 2020, from the catastrophic summer fires to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, focusing on the mental health of children and young people, their families, and of course, educators, has never been more important. The events of 2020 created a need, but also an opportunity to approach mental health in a different way, a more deliberate way. Early learning services and schools tell us their time and remote learning helped them build stronger relationships with families, which are key to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

We've seen learning communities embrace initiatives such as wellbeing Wednesdays. Early learning services and schools are doing new things to support the wellbeing of educators, like a school in Perth that ran a staff dance session during remote learning to keep spirits up. We've heard a lot of stories about teachers doing amazing things to support their relationships with children and young people.

One story was about a teacher who decided to deliver presents to every child in a class during isolation, as a way of staying connected. One student who lived on a rural property didn't have a letterbox, so he built one in anticipation of his teachers present. Like so many other children and young people across Australia, his relationship with his teacher was important to him, so that personal touch was vital in helping to maintain that connection.

During this time, we've also seen big changes in how people have responded to mental health needs. People are talking about mental health more openly now more than ever. Many people have experienced mental health challenges for the first time in their lives. This seems to be a shift in stigma about mental health, as more people in more environments are checking in on those around them.

Most schools are also prioritizing mental health and wellbeing, in ways that never have before. We've definitely seen an increase in engagement in our Be You initiative. More educators are registering with Be You completing professional learning modules and attending our interactive sessions and events.

This increased commitment to mental health means this is the time to get approaches to mental health and education right. We need to harness these opportunities to respond to the mental health needs that we will face in our early learning services and schools in 2021 and beyond. And unfortunately, even as we move beyond the immediate health impact of the pandemic, the economic, social and emotional outcomes will persist for years to come and have an impact on mental health. As the saying goes, we need to not waste this crisis, and instead, we have an opportunity to learn from it and grow through it.

As we plan for 2021, it's a good time to stop and consider the evidence about what really works. The evidence tells us that the most effective approach to mental health prevention and promotion is one that involves the whole learning community.

At Be You, we always say that mental health and wellbeing needs to be thought through, in terms of community, not just an individual.

There is sometimes a misconception that mental health is something people have to manage by themselves, and we've heard it all before. You know, we need to be more resilient. We need to pull ourselves together. However, creating a mentally healthy learning environment can't be up to the individual alone. It must be a planned and integrated part of how the early learning service and school operates.

Through our Be You initiative, we support early learning services and schools to develop a positive, inclusive, and resilient community where every child, young person, educator, and family, can achieve the best possible mental health.

So what does a whole learning community approach look like? This is something we're asked really often, so we'd like to share you some of the things that we consider and share with a lot of our stakeholders in our schools and services.

So considering mental health promotion, and prevention, as part of your early learning service, or school strategic plans, policies, processes, learning, program, and curriculum, communications, and interactions is really critical.

Consulting with, and involving staff, and children, and young people, and families, as you plan, review your mental health and wellbeing work. Equipping all staff with the knowledge to support the mental health of children and young people, as well as their own mental health, and that of their colleagues. Teaching and role modeling social and emotional learning to children and young people, so they can look after their own mental health, and also each other. Working with families, including sharing information with all families about mental health and relevant services, especially locally, to support their children. Observing children and young people to identify those in need of additional mental health support. And developing a culture, where talking about feelings and seeking mental health support is normalized and supported, including through partnerships, and with local services. And finally, creating a supportive and inclusive community where everyone feels connected through positive relationships.

At Be You, we support early learning services and schools to take this whole of school and the whole of early learning service approach to mental health through a range of planning and implementation tools and Be You consultant support. It's important to register with Be You as a learning community, rather than only as an individual educator, to have access to these additional tools and consultant support.

To register as a Be You learning community, you need your leadership support, and we provide resources to help you make a case to them.

Even if you're already registered as a Be You learning community these resources might help you convince your leadership to prioritize progressing towards a more mentally healthy learning community. Our resources can support your early learning service or school to meet national, state, and territory requirements that relate to mental health and wellbeing. And there's a link to all the details in the chat now.

Be You is available at no cost and is funded by the Australian Government. Be You consultants can guide you through the Be You resources and connect you with educator networks. Consultants can also support you to prepare for and also respond to critical incidents. But with evidenced based design by mental health professionals and academics, as well as educators, we hope you involve everyone at your early learning service or school in supporting mental health. So you achieve your best possible outcomes.

Be You supports early learning services and schools to develop a positive, inclusive, and resilient learning community where every child, young person, educator, and family, can achieve this positive mental health. And Be You develops the capability of educators to build the foundations of life, long mental health, and wellbeing in children and young people. We support you to grow the most mentally healthy generation. A link is in the chat now, with details on how to register as a Be You learning community, and all the associated benefits that go with it.

As many of you know, Be You has a number of planning and implementation tools, which help early learning services in schools take a whole learning community approach to mental health and wellbeing. I'm going to run you through three today and talk about what's new and what could be good tools for you to use when planning for 2021.

Especially if you're looking at what you've learned through 2020 and how you can actually take that into 2021 to thrive. So there's a link now in the chat that actually gives you a direct link to all the tools that we're going to be talking about.

With so many Australians developing a better understanding of the importance of mental health, 2021 would be a good time to gather data and insights to gauge your learning communities views about wellbeing. If you haven't done this before, we actually suggest you doing it. Again, as many of the views have shifted after the events in 2020, Be You provide a survey platform to help you consult with educators, families and children and young people about mental health and wellbeing at your learning community.

There's a different survey for each one of these groups. An example of one of the survey questions from the educator survey is actually now on the screen. The link to the survey is in the chat right now, so you can access that there.

Surveys can help you identify strengths to build on and areas for improvement within your learning community in relation to mental health and wellbeing. Early learning services and schools, often they'll tell us survey's help them decide on mental health and wellbeing priorities.

For example, a Primary School in Perth had good programs to address some of the children's needs, but after quite a big change in their leadership, team-based surveys and the results led them to have a new focus and staff wellbeing. And I think many of you probably understand that those sort of leadership changes and changes in any priorities can actually really help by gathering data and evidence.

The surveys are a good way to check hunches too and collect data to make the case to leadership to address the wellbeing need. If you've used our surveys before, it's good to know that we've recently launched a new survey's platform.

Since launching in November 2018, Be You has continued to develop its resources, and we've chosen this new surveys platform based on educator feedback. The new platform aims to provide a better user experience for early learning service and school staff, managing their learning community surveys.

For example, the new survey platform will make it easier to filter and compare results, put it from different time periods, and share the results within the learning community. That can also capture more qualitative information on educator, family, children, and young people, understanding, and views of mental health and wellbeing, analyze and highlight strengths to build on, and areas for improvement within the learning community in relation to mental health and wellbeing. And also, point towards which domains in the Be You framework could serve as priority areas, supporting early learning services and schools to identify which Be You professional learning modules, the best suited to their needs, and assisting them to use the planning and implementation tools.

The Be You Implementation and Reflection Toolkit is also a great resource to reflect on 2020 and plan priorities and actions for 2021 and beyond. It is a good step to take after surveying your learning community. The tool is used to capture information about a range of factors, including policies, procedures, physical environment, and other areas which can influence mental health and wellbeing.

Like the surveys, each of the statements is mapped to the Be You framework, helping you to identify areas for your early learning service and school that they can focus on. Be You can choose, or you can actually choose to either fill in a PDF or an Excel template that includes 28 statements and associated reflective questions. You can see Statement one on the screen.

You can also rank to what degree you're learning community reflects a statement based on the answers you give to the reflective questions. If you use the Excel version of this tool, then your results will be mapped on the Be You Implementation Profile, similar to the one that you see on your screen now, and your current position will be on the solid line, and your desired position will be in the dotted line. Your profile will help you understand your progress within each of the five Be You framework domains.

It is normal for your learning community to be at a different implementation phase within each domain, as each learning community will, have different strengths needs, and priorities. The tool is designed to be used on an ongoing basis to help you reflect on and plan your early learning services and school's progress towards being a health, mentally healthy community. Early learning services and schools tell us this tool is helpful in supporting them to identify priorities they hadn't actually thought of.

Once you've identified your priority areas in the Be You framework, it's easier to select Be You professional learning modules for staff to complete.

Actions from the Be You Actions catalog and programs from the Be You Programs Directory, which is also mapped to the Be You framework.

At Sawyers Valley Primary School just outside of Perth, teachers believed their learning communities ability to cope with the pandemic was strengthened, by the shared culture, common language, and strong policies and procedures around mental health and wellbeing. In the lead up to the pandemic, the school had been using the resources like surveys to consult with the broader learning community and then the Reflection Tool, which enabled them to write the school in different areas and come up with a social and emotional wellbeing plan. The whole staff were actually involved in use.

We know educator wellbeing was an area that needed more attention before the coronavirus pandemic hit. And recent events have brought the issue to even greater focus. It has been a tough year, especially for educators, who have done their best to support the children and young people in their care. Times of change can be challenging, but they can also result in great learning and personal reflection.

As the end of 2020 approaches, it could be a good time to sit down and reflect on your own wellbeing, and plan, also, how to look after yourself and your colleagues next year.

We don't always notice when we're starting to struggle with our mental health and wellbeing, and when we're experiencing distress, it can be difficult to think clearly. Planning for challenges ahead of time can make a lot of difference to how we will handle a situation to support our own wellbeing. So Be You just released a Wellbeing Plan for educators. The link is in the chat right now.

The template is divided into two sections. The first part guides you through a process of reflecting on your strengths and how you can use them to overcome challenges.

And that's actually shown on the screen at the moment, Aspects of your role that raise your stress levels, your warning signs of stress and burnout, actions you can take to support yourself. People who help make you feel better during difficult times, work habits to support your wellbeing, action you can take to support your wellbeing, whilst also supporting others.

The second part of the template focuses on helping you plan time away from work, if you need it, including actions you might consider if you're unable to work due to your mental health or wellbeing. Things to consider also and discuss with a health professional and your employer ahead of a return to work.

A key component of Be You is supporting Educator wellbeing. Links to other resources are currently being put in the chat, including a fact sheet, a list of wellbeing tools for you, and a link to a recorded webinar that we did earlier this year.

Over the next 12 months, Be You will be developing new resources to support educator wellbeing. So please, look out for them in the Be You emails and on social media.

We're also looking for educators to share their personal reflections about their wellbeing, and how it was affected by the events of 2020, so you can share them with us and share them with other educators as well.

We also know that educators find learning from each other to be extremely valuable. So, there's a link in the chat that gives you more information about that, and as a first step, it just involves completing a 10 minute survey.

So, we're now going to actually get into a session where we're really keen to actually engage with you now and have you as interactive as possible.

So, we're going to use MentiMeter, hopefully some of you have used it. If you've got a device, your computer, or your phone. All you need to do is pop into your phone, or your computer, in the web browser, menti.com and it's all on the top of that first question, and then you need to pop that code in, 7674690.

So I'll just give you a moment to do that, and we're going to be asking you three questions. And this, for us, is a really great opportunity of just seeing where everyone's at.

So the first question, is your learning community more actively supporting children, and your young people's mental health and wellbeing now, compared to last year in 2019? So I'm going to give you a couple of minutes to just pop in where we're at with that, and hopefully, I can see on the screen how we progress in that area.

For us and the crew back at Be You across our three organizations, Beyond Blue, headspace and ECA. We often find that these types of questions enable us to sort of gauge where educators are, at this point, how we can support best, and also where we're at, as well as a workforce, in understanding where with schools and early learning services around as well.

So, it looks like we've got a big component saying 'a bit more', which is great to see. Got a few people saying 'a lot more', which, again, as we've reflected on, and I think a lot of the consultants in the field from headspace and ECA have also seen that 2020 has brought some considerable new plans and ways of working around mental health and wellbeing. Someone's saying, 'not really'. And, again, this is hopefully an opportunity for people to start tapping into the resources to start to make plans, so that if we ever ask this question next year, we'd love to see those really shift into a bit more, which will be fantastic. So we're getting there. It looks like we're stabilizing. So it looks like there has been a bit of a shift, and thank you everyone for sharing that. We might move on to the second question now.

And the second question is, do you think people are talking more openly about mental health at your early learning service or school? And again, this is something that our teams at Be You talk about often. This is really important for us, because I think for us, we talk about the fact that if we're talking about it and sharing it, we're learning more, and it's about help seeking, and also help receiving and help giving.

So, I think that's a massive opportunity for us to sort of, you know, look at where we can support more. So, we've got 'a lot more', which is fantastic to see. And I know even across our organizations as a workforce, we talk about it a lot more openly, of course, because we work in mental health. But we've also reflected on the fact that we see this a lot more across our early learning services and schools, which is a great thing. So again, thank you, everyone, for sharing at this point.

And lastly, we've got a third question, and this is an open question. And we want you to sort of just type in describing something your early learning service or school has done this year to actually support mental health and wellbeing.

So, if you want to write in, and what we're going to do is create a bit of a word cloud out of this. And this will be great, because this is, again, sharing with everyone on our webinar today, what people are actually doing. So, we'll leave this for a couple of minutes.

Fantastic. I'll tell you what we've heard a lot about, mindfulness cards, even yawning cards and sharing cards that actually enable people to be having good conversations. Fantastic. Dance parties, gratitude practice, I'd love to hear a bit more about that. We've seen a lot more policies being developed and procedures around wellbeing as well. And I think also, too, and I'll be interested in this, either in the chat, or even our panelists when they come on board, the opportunity of how people have started to really focus on how do we bring this in as procedure, and how do we actually do it being online, especially as educators.

How did you connect when you weren't working together, and was that good for your own mental health and wellbeing? Meditation and mindfulness. We have heard that quite a few schools and early learning services brought meditation, mindfulness opportunities for staff, online and remote, to again engage and really help with mental health and wellbeing.

These Wellbeing Wednesdays. I'd love to hear more on those. We've had some great stories about that really focusing on a day, a week where everyone is very mindful of mental health and wellbeing, yoga, that's definitely something that I partake in to really help. So thank you. This is great. I look at this and see another big bag of tools that we can all walk away with as ideas.

Again, bringing people into our learning communities, bringing families in, having young people derive mental health opportunities as well, and using their voice to really construct massive opportunities.

So, I hope our panelists are writing some of these down, because this is good for them, in their roles, as consultants out in the field with early learning services and schools. But, I think it's also something that they will be reflecting on, and be able to share with us in a minute. So, this is great. And hopefully, we can share this with you again. So, thank you so much for this.

OK, so, this is a great opportunity to take some of those tools and learnings, and now share this with our panelists, as well, and we've been really fortunate, to be able to bring online Hannah Jamieson, and also Sammi Wilson.

So, I'm going to talk a little bit about who these fabulous people are. So, Sammi Wilson is a Be You consultant from Early Childhood Australia. Her extensive career includes educator and leadership roles with a strong focus on mental health and school aged care settings. And has worked as a social worker, as well for more than 10 years. Sammi is passionate about personal empowerment and believes that positive mental health is a key to living your best life.

And then, we also have Hannah Jamieson, who has been at headspace Schools for almost three years and recently in the State Manager role in Victoria. Previously, Hannah has been an educator including a head of school. Hannah has a master's in education in wellbeing. She's passionate about working with school leaders in wellbeing.

So, thank you both for joining us today, and it's fantastic to see you. And again, knowing both of you. I know you come with a plethora of incredible experiences that I think people on the webinar today would love to hear from you because this is about sharing and taking some of the learnings that we've had from 2020. And what you've witnessed and what you've worked with, with schools and services and how we take that into 2021 to thrive.

So, I actually might start with Hannah. I've got a couple of questions for Hannah, and then we have a couple of questions for Sammi. And we're going to also then try and draw on some questions from the people on our webinar today as well that is coming through in the chat.

But I'm going to start with Hannah. How can we actually help children and young people be resilient? And this is something that we've often talked about Hannah, so I'd love for you to share that with us today.

Hannah Jamieson, headspace

Thank you. And thank you for having me. I just wanted to start by recognizing all the educators who've joined us today. This has been a heck of a year, so, well done on getting through it. And thanks for having me here.

I think the idea of resiliency is a really interesting one. And I am wondering whether sometimes educators can feel a little bit of pressure that is something that they have to be responsible for teaching. And I'm really keen to kind of start to think about resiliency as being something that we practice, that it's not, you know, something that we get right straight away. This year has been a really good opportunity for all of us, adults, and young people to really start to build resiliency.

The way I try and understand resiliency is it being like a muscle. So if I went to the gym and I start, you know, lifting a weight, my bicep gets bigger. And we do the same with resiliency. The more that I move and practice resiliency, the stronger that muscle will be. And so one of the things that I would encourage educators to think about, is, how do I give the young people in my early learning service, or my school, an opportunity to practice that, to start to build that. Some of the things that are really important, that a set of practical ways to talk about resiliency are things like modeling. So, you know, if things don't go quite to plan, that was really tough today. One of the things that I did to handle that is actually openly talking about, here was something difficult I faced, and here is a way that I overcame it.

Really, talking to young people about self talk. So when tough things happened to me, I can say, “oh, you know, gee, that was hard, oh, gosh, I feel really upset”. But I'm able to kind of talk to myself in my head about, come on Hannah, you know, you can do this, you've done X, Y, Z before. So really helping young people of any age to start to think about their own self talk. How do you talk to yourself? And I loved this idea, particularly for younger children, I mean for everybody, but would you talk to yourself? Like a friend would talk to you, so can you be kind to yourself and say, I did my best there.

One of the other things around resiliency, is this idea of buoyancy. I love, if we have the analogy of a buoy sitting on the ocean and no matter whether the seas go up or down or it's really stormy, our buoys sitting on the top of the water. So it's a really lovely visual to talk to young people about what you have in your cupboard of coping strategies, that helps you stay on top of the water. So is it going for a walk? And again, we can come back to some of that lovely modeling around what I do to take care of myself and talking young people through this is what do you do to help keep yourself on top of the water.

And I was just reflecting before back on the third Menti question where everyone was putting in these lovely suggestions. Wouldn't it be great to, it's almost like you open up this habit of strategies, and I can pick out the ones that I like. Wouldn't it be lovely to sort of talk to young people about, remember the last time it was tough, I remember term one, you felt a bit uncertain, you know, there were tests, or, you know, you're in a new class, do you remember what you did and we could say you came to me and had a hug. We went for a walk. We made sure you got enough sleep, and you actually remind them. Because sometimes when our young people aren't regulating well, they might forget that. They have those coping strategies.

One of the other things I was thinking can help young people prepare. And we know 2020 is this incredible example of something we never could prepare for, but with little small, and, I mean, small adversities, you know, like flat tyres, having a cold, all those things we can talk to young people about that little adversities are a part of life. And how you can have things in place to help you deal with those. And the final thing, I think Lou, is around this idea of agency, of giving young people, we know everyone out there will know a young person, a child or teenager, particularly will love choice, they need choice. And so, you may not be able to give them every choice in the world, or it may just be what you'd like to do. I will be, rather than, you know, do what you like, but giving young people a chance, so I can see that you're really upset at the moment. Because things are tough. Would you like me to talk to you about it? Would you like me to distract you, would you like to do something, so we don't have to think about it, so giving that sense of agency as well. I think.

Louisa Ellum, Beyond Blue

Fantastic, I think I talked about agency earlier. I think that is one of the big things that we often forget, is the voice of young people, and giving them the power to actually make decisions in this space. That's fantastic, and actually talking about children and young people again. You know, we're coming to the end of the year. This is a time of transition, so, you know, how do we actually help children and young people transition well in this space and especially thinking about 2020 moving into 2021?

Hannah Jamieson, headspace

Absolutely. And I'm coming myself, I'm based in Melbourne, so, I think for those of you that are joining from Victoria as well, the COVID experience again has really been something quite difficult, and I know from the work that consultants do across Australia, that transition has been a really big, for some it's been a really big concern and for some it's been "oh my goodness, what does 2021 look like?"

I guess I'd really encourage educators to be re-assured, and I'm sure this, you know, I'm preaching to the choir here, but transition, as we know, isn't an event, it's a process, and, it's not, you know, there was one time that I had to get it right. All that times past and now you know, I've missed it. Our transition is ongoing, so whether that's out of an early learning service into school, whether it's from grades 6 into 7, into secondary, or whether that's actually out of school into further study and work, whatever that might be. That transition is absolutely a process and I'd really encourage people to feel reassured for educators to feel really reassured. That transition is definitely about quality and connectedness is very much about quality, rather than quantity.

The reason I'm kind of making that a really laboring the point I suppose, is, we might have had situations, for example, where our young people, our prep kids, might have had a significant part of this year, where they actually weren't at school. Or, you know, that our grade six's now, might feel a certain sense of loss, that they've, they've not had this routine. You know, that, I haven't been able to finish grade six the way I expected to, I guess that there's three main things I'd really encourage people to think about with transition. The first one is about attached relationships. So, when we move from whichever setting into the next phase, identifying for young people but also for their parents and carers who are the attached relationships. So this is your new teacher or educator. These are the people that you can turn to that make sure that there is a relationship. I'm absolutely meaning this is going into 2021, it's in term three next year. It's not just the first couple of weeks, it is making sure that young people know, these are my people to speak. These are the people that I can go to and just planting that seed.

I like that analogy of, OK, things may not be tough now, I have this wonderful first few terms, you know, in high school or into primary school, but there's a seed that's been planted that, I know you're the person I can go to when things feel a bit wobbly.

The second one is around integration. So, bringing the young people and their families into the community to come around them and help them to understand that they are now part of this new community. And I'm really excited in a few moments to hear from Bern who's one of our schools in Rockhampton, is this idea around what it means to be a learning community.

And the third one is around perception for young people and for their family, a successful transition. A lot of it is about perception. Do I now belong here in this new space? And the way that that can be shown and educators and learning communities do it beautifully is, how am I a person that's, you know, does someone noticed me, does someone know my name, does someone say hi, does someone notice when, you know, they know that the grand finals coming up, they're going to be really excited that this team won. Is that perception that I am part of the community?

I know for a lot of people, there might be a bit of, a bit of concern around, OK, what about when young people don't transition successfully?

I want to just let you know, and I guess I'm saying this, to reassure you, there's been a lot of work done around communities affected, particularly by natural disasters and bushfires. And they looked at, what is it about these communities that made them really resilient, and also made the young people particularly really bounce back. And the one thing that these studies talked about was social connection. It's not there were mental health professionals there straight away. It's not that parents had all these extra skills. It was actually that there was a sense of connection, so I'd really encourage educators to think, when in doubt, oh my goodness, what can I do? 2020 has been massive. Connection is the most important thing to the young people.

Louisa Ellum, Beyond Blue

Fantastic. Thank you. What I'm doing to do Hannah is hand Sammi a couple of questions, and then we'll come back because I know that we want to chat to Bernadette from Rockhampton about her experiences.

So, Sammi. My first question to you is, what are your key takeaways from 2020?

Sammi Wilson, Early Childhood Australia

And thanks for having me. Hannah, I just want to say, we must be on the same page, I loved what you talked about. However I've got a bit of a different take, so key takeaways for me and reiterating conversation throughout the webinar, as we have seen wellbeing come to the forefront and the focus this year, in a big way, like never before. And we're seeing the development of staff wellbeing policies, child wellbeing policies, and of course Lou touched on the educator wellbeing plan.

Yeah, it's just been huge in that way, and just what MentiMeter showed. It's been talked about more often than not, and it's open dialog. And I think that's really exciting.

So, that's right up there for me for this huge year. The other thing I've really noticed is going to celebrate how agile I think we've all become in finding new ways of working in new ways of being together, kind of looking at transitions, finding new ways for drop off, and pick up when you can't, when families can come into the room, and there's been so many creative and positive stories around that. And the children. Increasing sense of agency, and having choice. And, by not having parents come in and drop them in to the room, they've got quite independent and, quite proud. It's been quite fascinating, I think, to watch that evolve. But the biggest thing I just wanted to say, is, talking about resilience, is to acknowledge and celebrate how resilient educators have been this year.

And, if you didn't know, you were, you really need a shout out and a huge cheer on, because it's a forefront, and you have been incredibly strong, supporting children, young people, and families, throughout the whole year. And then to manage your own lives and your own families. So, yeah, I just think that's a huge, good reason to celebrate 2020. So there are my takeaways.

Louisa Ellum, Beyond Blue

Thank you, and I think that's, you know, you both have mentioned things about connection, resilience, and this is what this webinar is about. It's like, you know what, what has worked so well, and what did we actually do that we didn't think we were going to be able to do? How do we harness that and then throw it into 2021 and actually make it work and actually grow and be even stronger? So, my next question to you Sammi, is how would you press the reset button for 2020.

Sammi Wilson, Early Childhood Australia

Yeah, Where to start? I'd really like to encourage, I guess, a bit of reflection time and perhaps revisiting your vision or personal philosophy, service philosophy, vision statement, I think it would be a great time just to get back and just ask yourself, why are we here? What are we wanting to achieve and where are we going? You know, what's the vision?

Because I think 2020 has certainly, turned us 360, and I think just sheer surviving and developing new strategies and coping and moving through the, as we roll into the end of December. I think it would be great time just to revisit who we are as a school, as a service. And even your own personal vision as an educator. What's my personal vision and ask yourself those questions, like, what is my why?

You know, we all ask that every now and then, like, why am I here? But I think if you get yourself just drill down a bit and say, why am I here? Just remind yourselves. Because it can often get lost. And we know that good vision really inspires you and gives you energy and gives you purpose and can really guide every choice and every decision of why you're doing what you're doing, great foundation, and actually Lou flicking back onto your around implementation reflection tool that you brought up.

That can be a great supporting space to start focusing on your vision. Because it helps you really hone in on your strengths and really supports that reflective practice. So, it could be a starting point too revisiting and recreating if need be your vision.

Louisa Ellum, Beyond Blue

That's great. I think the biggest thing I think we've got an opportunity to do is reflect, and, you know, having worked in schools and, you know, as an educator, we don't honor that time. But I think this is, I think, if anything, 2020 is a time, where we need to reflect. Draw on what we know we've done well, and thrive in 2021 and actually Sammi a bit later I might come back and ask you a question about some of your tips around thriving.

Hannah I'm going to come back to you, because I know you wanted to talk to Bernadette. Great things that have been happening and Rockhampton, and it's always so good to showcase, some tools and resources and practices from people working in schools and services.

So Hannah, I'll throw back to you and if you wanted to introduce Bernadette, that'd be fantastic.

Hannah Jamieson, headspace

Thank you. And, sorry to be cheeky but I'll just jump in there Sammi. I think the other thing about the reset, you know, how can we reset for 2021? I'm wondering if one of the other tools that might be wonderful for educators to use would be the educator wellbeing plan. Lou, you know, you mentioned having that time to reflect. I mean, what a wonderful way to honor your own wellbeing, to have that time at the start of the year before things get really busy, to say, I'm going to actually sit down and really deliberately look at my own wellbeing plan and using that template to, you know, this is what I need for myself as an educator. And if you do it before times get tough, that can, you know, then I can just grab it when things are a bit bumpy, so I was wondering, I've just jumped on the end of your question there.

Sammi Wilson, Early Childhood Australia

Go ahead, and I think that's a great addition. Really, you can't build a solid foundation if you're not solid yourself, and I think that's the key takeaway to start off for 2021.

Hannah Jamieson, headspace

Awesome. Absolutely. I'd just like to introduce Bernadette Brennan. Bernadette has been kind enough to join us. She is from Rockhampton, so beautiful, sunny, warm Rockhampton, she's the Assistant Principal at St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School. Thank you so much for joining us, and it's your second, last day. I'd love to hear from you around your experience with Be You, I guess, and both as a leader and an educator, I guess, some of the really important things that you will run from the Be You.

Bernadette Brennan, St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Yeah, thanks, Hannah, I have just scribble down pages of notes here all around me, and it's really interesting, just to hear. And I said, why don't you just revisit your vision?

Like we have our school vision, but thanks to the Implementation Reflection Tool, we now have a mental health and wellbeing vision. So that was something that we created on the back of that. So I'm just oh, there's a tick. I think it's also really important, how you sort of said about getting the teachers to reflect on their whys.

We're looking at our process of asking questions about what to teach us value, and Hannah I actually had written down the wellbeing plan to educators and I've written week zero for 2021 next to it because that's all, I just thought that would be an excellent way to start a year. Really quickly, our journey. We were introduced to you just over 12 months ago, and then. I was contacted by Scott Taylor from Be You Townsville as a team leader, and he is my contact. And we started having some conversations, and we throw around the ideas of the Implementation Tool, versus Surveys, and we'd already done big surveys this year. And we went with the tools for a few different reasons. We are pretty reactive in our management style. Like, it's something that we're working on, but we're aware that we're reactive rather than proactive, so we thought, no, doing the tool, might give us a bit of a direction.

So the other thing was, I was probably scared as a person, as leading it, and I talked about, at least once before, about feeling, really vulnerable about what we might hear from a survey.

So we'll just use the tool with a group of six or seven staff members. So, we created a little health huddle and we meet a couple of times a term and just started out. It's just brainstorming what can we do for the mental health and wellbeing of our staff. Well, it's now, through the tool, we've extended that to the whole school community. But the tool, it took us a while to get through it, through the support of our leadership team. So, we were given a day to get through it. We didn't get it done in the day. But, it was interesting Louisa to see your copy of the tool at the beginning with that really big pentagon, as is like these tiny, little, we're very much in the participating section, but that's OK, you've got to start somewhere. We know what we're doing. We do well, we just don't have, the policies and procedures and things, and the implementation tool has helped identify that for us.

So, it's given us a lot of direction for what to do next. So, out of the tool, we identified the need to have a vision, and so, that was our next step, was to create a vision and a mission. Our vision is, you know, ideally what do I want to be as a school and that is our school moto. I strive for an ideal. So we talked about what is our ideal, mentally healthy community? Then, you know, now it's our mission of how we're going to achieve that. It has been really who we did identify from the tool that learning resilience is going to be our focus for 2021.

We are already using it, but we can do it even better. So we just thought we'll start there and improve on some success that we are having. And it was really interesting that you kept talking about resilience because it's going to be a resilience focus. So we're having a whole school approach, community approach, going to try and drive some parent engagement.

Yeah, So, in our world, it has been a really challenging year. And I think, we've been very lucky in Queensland and even more showing regional areas to not be as Covid affected. For us, probably, one of the positives to come out of the challenging it is Be You. We've had some really good support through a couple of incidences that have happened at the school each year, from clinical consultants and the team, and also Rockhampton Catholic Education, has now got a big wellbeing push as well, which is really good as part of the dialysis, and strategic plan. And so, I probably for the first time that filter down into our school improvement plan. So, we the leadership team, sat down and worked on it, what we want to focus on for 2021. And really good to be able to say that mental health and wellbeing was probably the first thing that we really talked about. And it's nice to sort of see that taking priority over curriculum. And I, because, they can't learn when they're not mentally healthy, really. So we want the best out of our little people, we gotta look after that first and look after the educators as well. We're also looking at running, like, little professional learning communities next year to work through the resilience modules. We already have all our staff in a learning community anyway.

Hannah Jamieson, headspace

So, well just isn't that amazing. Like, I love that, you know that vision that you have around that, The families, as well. I'm going to share that language, you know, so that that really important point around that the families will be able to have that similar kind of language to help their young people help seeking and have resiliency, as well. I think that's brilliant.

Louisa Ellum, Beyond Blue

Thank you. Bern. Actually one of the things that you said there Bern, which I just hope people take away, is probably one of the biggest guides that we can have, is, you got to start somewhere. And I know that we hear from consultants and then schools and services, that it's just too big, where do we start? And even doing policies and procedures are massive. But if you just start with one thing, and that's your achievement for the year, and I know both Hannah and Sammi will actually agree with me here. One thing that has done really well in a year will build on to so many other little things, which then create a really holistic pole of learning service in school, way of working. So is there anything else, Bernadette, you want to share around sort of some of the key things that you've been doing?

Bernadette Brennan, St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Probably this year, really through the Covid we identified where we needed to look after the staff. It's great to hear you know these wellbeing Wednesdays, one of our young guys in our little health huddle, he, we don't have many males on staff, so he went away and just did a Google search of, words beginning with W words, for wellbeing. And it came out with this massive list. So, each week, we've been doing like, workout Wednesday, Witty Wednesday, where we got all the kids to bring, you know, the best dad jokes to school. We had a welcoming Wednesday where the whole school brought a name tag where the goal was just to say hello to as many people as possible using their actual name. That was really good. Foods always a good one, especially for the staff, just bringing people together. You know, we find, as teachers, everyone's just so busy, and they spend their time in the classrooms, eating on the run and that sort of thing. So we probably had quite a few staff lunches that made everyone come back to the staff sanctuary and sit and talk, because it's a nonnegotiable, that you're not allowed to talk work in that room, just a few little things like that have been really good.

Louisa Ellum, Beyond Blue

Yeah, that's fantastic. Well, thank you, Bernadette. It's just great. And again, it's so good to actually have people share what they're doing and what's worked and what is successful. So what I might do is actually I'm going to ask Sammi and Hannah just a couple more quick questions and looking to make this really simple. Because, what I'm hearing, and the experiences and everything that people have been sharing to date, is about sort of what we've learned.

So, Hannah and Sammi, have you got a couple of tips about really what it's going to take to thrive in 2021 and beyond? I don't know which one of you want to start, but just a couple of things for people to takeaway as a tip.

Sammi Wilson, Early Childhood Australia

I might jump in if that's alright Hannah. I was just inspired. I do have a few other things, but just really inspired listening to Bern. Well, and the word cloud that occurred earlier. Look what you're already doing. And just because we're moving into 2021, where we may not see a repeat of 2020, I guess we can't be 100% sure. Can we not drop what you're already doing? Those wellbeing Wednesdays, mindfulness, the gratitude. All these incredible things.

I think, that's what builds wellbeing and health, a good mental health, and resilience and connection, social connection, knowing that sense of belonging. So that's, yeah, just keep doing all that stuff, don't just put it in the cupboard, because we don't need it, it's not a crisis.

Louisa Ellum, Beyond Blue

Fabulous, thank you! Hannah, what's your tips for thriving next year? So we can all take it away. And what we're doing, the last couple of weeks of school term.

Hannah Jamieson, headspace

I think the main one for me is, is be gentle to yourself. I think we, we generally as educators, we hold ourselves to such high standards. You know, we will be incredibly kind and compassionate to our young people when they make mistakes, or when they need to practice things, or when they are uncertain, or feeling low. But for some reason, and it's all of us, no judgement, is that we sometimes forget to have that same lens over ourselves, that we need to be really gentle to ourselves. So I think absolutely use the end of this year to recharge that come back with a gentleness to yourself. That 2020 happened and they will be rocky patches in 2021 as we try and navigate this new normal, which, you know, we're all dealing with. But just be gentle to yourself.

Louisa Ellum, Beyond Blue

Fantastic. Well, thank you both of you, thank you for being incredible colleagues of ours, and also the work that you do with the schools and the early learning services as well, so we really appreciate that. So, we're going to finish up the webinar. So, I've got a couple more things to just talk to everyone about. So, thanks again.

Sammi Wilson, Early Childhood Australia

Thanks, Lou.

Louisa Ellum, Beyond Blue

Thank you so much. All right. I'm going to do a quick webinar recap.

We've actually talked today, about quite a lot. We've talked about the opportunity in 2020 to approach mental health differently, and you've seen through the discussions that we've had, the sharing that you did, and especially in that word cloud. I think there's a lot of great examples of the way you approach 2020. But, again, take those and look at how you actually take them into 2021. I've shared with you a couple of, three tools, and especially ones that we've actually developed, and you know, really improved in ways that, because we've listened to you, and we want to make sure that we're actually meeting your needs. So the new surveys platform, the implementation and reflection tool, and you also heard from Bernadette that it actually works. And from that, remember, please just do one little step at a time. You've got to start somewhere. And also the new wellbeing plan for educators. And of course in 2021, we're going to see more resources coming out from Be You for educators. And then finally, you know the sharing that we've done with a Q&A panel with Bernadette, with Hannah and also with Sammi. And then taking on all of the people that they're working with and learning from that and sharing it with you. So what other educators are planning for 2021 is a good thing to do. And, again, to think about it and share with your colleagues.

So, it's been for me, really interesting. And I always learn so much from my colleagues, when we actually talk about what's actually happening with services in schools. And the more that we can share and connect, the more we can learn together.

So, what I want you to just remember, is that we encourage you to continue to engage with Be You, learn more, and also keep up to date with it. So if you're learning community, isn't yet implementing the Be You Whole Learning Community Approach, we actually encourage you to register online and get started with support from a consultant, like Sammi and like Hannah.

So there's information, again, in the chat box, about how to actually engage, and then, of course, if you're looking for resources to support you with specific needs, or concerns, such as adapting to change transition, again, go and visit beyou.edu.au. And again, there's more information in the chat box.

And finally, please keep up to date with the Be You resources, the events, the tools and tips, things on Facebook, LinkedIn, and also Twitter. And also, subscribe to the Be You YouTube Channel to receive updates and new videos from Be you, because they're fascinating. And I think one of the things we've learned most is actually sharing from what's working, from the mouths of educators, so that we can actually connect together as much as possible.

So please, thank you very much for everything that you've done, for being here today, and for sharing with us. And please, take care and look after yourselves, as Hannah and Sammi have said, and be nice to yourselves and come in gently next year. So, thank you very much.

END TRANSCRIPT