

Be You Wellbeing Plan for Educators



This plan is designed to help you support your own mental health and wellbeing in the workplace and address the unique challenges you may experience as an educator.

It will help you to consider strategies and resources you can use to promote and protect your wellbeing in and outside work, or to manage any difficulties or disruptions at work.

Why a plan is important

Looking after your mental health is just as important as looking after your physical health.

There are plenty of practical steps you can take to promote and protect your mental health and wellbeing at work, and outside work as well. But it's also important to acknowledge that work – and life – can sometimes be challenging and leave us feeling stressed, upset, worried, or burned out. It's OK to not be OK and it's important to recognise if you are feeling that way, and take steps to get the support that is right for you.

You do not need to wait until you are experiencing difficulties to complete and implement this plan. Creating and maintaining a wellbeing plan is an important way to protect your mental health and wellbeing. The plan can also be useful to prepare for an unexpected period of difficulty and to know what to do when such an occasion arises.

How to use this plan

This personal wellbeing plan is a list of strategies in two parts. The first part focusses on the actions you can take to support your mental health and wellbeing. The second part can be used to help you navigate a break from your role and the subsequent return to work.

At each step consider the examples in the column on the left, and then record information relevant to your own situation on the right. Put your strategies in action as often as you can.

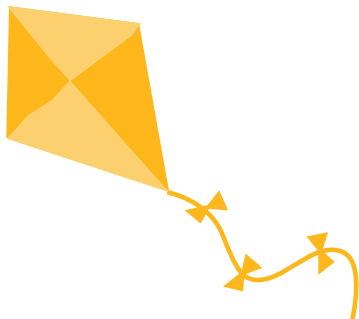
Supporting your own wellbeing

Focus on your strengths as an educator

We often take our strengths for granted. Paying attention to our strengths means we can be more aware of them and use them when facing challenges or to achieve goals. Ask yourself, what are my strengths as a person and as an educator that help me do my job well?

Examples:

- *Able to build strong relationships with others.*
- *Creative thinker and can make learning activities engaging.*



List as many of your strengths as you can.

List how you can use these strengths to promote your wellbeing at work and in life.

Recognise the challenges in your role that impact your wellbeing

There may be some aspects of your role that can raise your stress levels and make situations more difficult to manage. If you know what increases your stress, then you can often anticipate these challenges and put strategies in place to manage them effectively.

Example:

Stressor: A potentially difficult conversation with a parent or carer about a child or young person.

Strategy: Rehearsing the conversation, including some possible scenarios, with a colleague or mentor beforehand.

List your main triggers and the strategies you can use to address them.

Stressor/strategy:

Stressor/strategy:

Stressor/strategy:



Know the warning signs of stress and burnout

Warning signs are changes in thoughts, emotions or behaviours that suggest you may be experiencing high levels of stress, burnout or symptoms of depression and anxiety.

There are warning signs that we all have in common, and some that are unique to you. Knowing these warning signs can help you act early.

Some potential warning signs are listed below.

Personal

- Sad.
- Anxious.
- Irritable.
- Angry.
- Loss of interest or pleasure.
- Low energy.
- Difficulty sleeping.
- Increased consumption of alcohol.

At work

- Procrastination.
- Difficulty concentrating and meeting deadlines.
- Lower than normal work standards (less engaged, less attention to detail).
- Less social (or withdrawn) in interactions with colleagues, families, children, and young people.
- Low job satisfaction.
- Negative and not solutions focused.
- Cynical or critical attitudes at work.

List as many of your own warning signs as you can and actions that will help you address them.



Actions you can take to support yourself

There are actions that each of us can take to support our mental health and wellbeing, and to address concerns when they arise. These actions might include self-care, and also include raising work-related concerns with a member of the leadership team.

Some actions that support wellbeing may include:

- Scheduling time for activities that you enjoy.
- Staying in touch with family and friends.
- Talking to a trusted friend or colleague.
- Eating well and keeping physically fit.
- Prioritising sleep, by adopting good sleep habits.
- Engaging in meditation or mindfulness practices.
- Discussing role clarity and workload with relevant members of the leadership team.
- Discussing any issues with processes and protocols with the leadership team.
- Discussing your work needs with leadership.
- Logging occupational health and safety (OH&S) concerns.
- Accessing professional support (see 'Professional support you can call on')

Here are some suggested strategies for dealing with [stress](#) and [anxiety](#).

List as many strategies as you can to support yourself at work and at home.

Self-care strategies at work:

Self-care strategies at home:



Engage with family, friends and colleagues who are supportive

Having a network of family and friends you can turn to when life gets challenging is important for maintaining perspective and feeling grounded. Consider the people in your work or social circles who you enjoy being with, or who help you feel better during difficult times.

These people could include:

- colleagues
- friends
- family members
- mentors
- contacts in community groups.

Write down the names and contact details of your main supporters. Try to include at least one person you work with. Describe how you can stay in contact or reach out to them when you need to.



Practise work habits that support your wellbeing

Actions that improve your personal wellbeing at work can help you in times of stress and, in the longer term, help to prevent burnout anxiety or depression.

- Be realistic about what you can achieve at work.
- Work collaboratively and share the planning of activities and lessons with colleagues.
- Aim for balance and keep the hours you work in check.
- Celebrate successes with your colleagues and leadership team, as well as discussing concerns or difficulties.

List the things you believe you can do to maintain your wellbeing at work.

Actions you can take to support yourself while supporting others

Contributing to a mentally healthy work environment can add to your own wellbeing at work. Cultivate positive practices at work, even if it's just honest gratitude and small acts of kindness. These can quickly add up to make us feel good.

- Grab a coffee with a colleague.
- Write a thank-you note to a colleague.
- If you can, and if it's appropriate, offer to help a snowed-under colleague or community member with some tasks.
- Offer support or advice to a colleague who could use some help – but remember your boundaries. You're a colleague not a counsellor.

List some things you believe you can do with, and for, others to maintain your wellbeing.



Supporting your time off from work

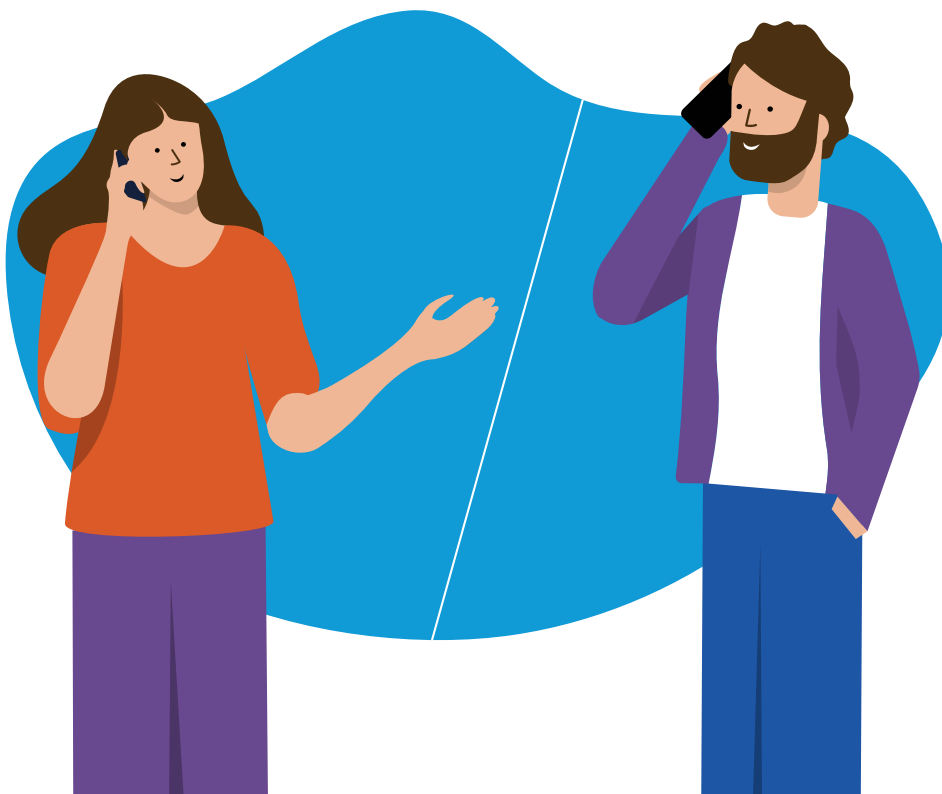
Your plan if you need time away from work

Sometimes people may need to take time out from work to recover from a mental health issue or condition. Even if this doesn't eventuate, it can be helpful to have a plan of action just in case.

- Before planning time away from your role, find out your work policy on leave.
- Consider how you might be able to change your duties to support remaining at work, if appropriate, and who you could speak to about this.
- If you are a member of a union, obtain advice on your options.
- If you are concerned about your finances, seek professional help. [Free financial counselling](#) is a great way of accessing practical advice and support.

Concerned about discussing your mental health with your employer? You can find more information at headsup.org.au.

List the actions you could take if you were unable to work.





Returning to work after taking time off

If you take time away from work, it's important to plan your return to work in a way that supports your mental health and wellbeing. For some people, a gradual return to work is ideal, rather than going back full time.

You can discuss this with your manager and your health professional on an ongoing basis.

Some things to consider:

- Who will you liaise with in your organisation to get support for your return?
- Can you talk to a leader or mentor about identifying duties and a return to work timeline?
- How many hours a week will you do? Will these hours increase over time?
- What tasks will you undertake?
- What information do you need to resume your role?
- How well does your return-to-work plan accommodate ongoing treatment, if any, for your mental health and wellbeing?
- What strategies can you implement when you return to work to protect your mental health and wellbeing?

List the things you need to consider and discuss with a health professional or your employer if you return to work after some time off.

Professional supports you can call on

Professional support is always available when you need it.

- General practitioner (GP) or mental health professional
- Your workplace Employee Assistance Program
- [Beyond Blue Support Service](#) 1300 22 4636
- [Lifeline](#) 13 11 14
- [MensLine Australia](#) 1300 78 99 78
- [headspace](#) (12–25 years old) 1800 650 890
- [HealthInfoNet](#)
- [Health Direct](#)

List the names, numbers and locations of helplines, mental health professionals, hospitals, and other useful support services.

If you need an interpreter to help speak with any of these services, you can call the Translating and Interpreting Service ([TIS National](#)) on 13 14 50.