

CHAMPIONING WELLBEING



A TOOLKIT



FOR EARLY YEARS EDUCATORS

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE FOR YOURSELF, FOR OTHERS AND YOUR COMMUNITY

The information contained within this toolkit can be used to guide, reflect, evaluate and build your own bank of practical ideas to promote and protect compassion resilience (the ability to maintain our physical, emotional and mental well-being). Take what you need - use it within daily life and share and care about it in your professional practice.

Use the toolkit:

- As part of a process to support individuals in sharing specific and necessary health information with relevant line managers or trustworthy stakeholders.
- To enable equitable access and participation at work.
- To support wellness action planning.
- To promote trust, respect and dignity in the workplace, to aid recovery, prevent health issues from developing or worsening, and maintain health and wellbeing.
- As a starting point to individually or collectively raise awareness of wellbeing, and the pillars of wellbeing.
- To preserve caring, compassion and energy.
- To advocate for compassion resilience, self-care and collective care.
- To empower help-seeking behaviours.
- To increase mental health literacy and enhance commitment to employee wellness action planning as well as workplace wellbeing strategies.
- To promote professional dialogue, developing workplace procedures and pathways that signpost to trusted sources of support and information.

A TOOLKIT TO EMPOWER PREVENTION, INTERVENTION, SIGNPOSTING & POSTVENTION



COMFORT AND SAFETY MESSAGE



This toolkit has been developed in line with Early Years Wellbeing Week 2023, which marks the sixth year of honouring our early years workforce, **Let's Talk Wellbeing - Together We Can Make Mental Health A Priority.**

Nothing in this toolkit has been designed to shock or distress, however health and wellbeing is a personal, often private subject, intertwined with life experiences. It is not uncommon for certain topics to feel sensitive or emotive. This is especially so if mental health is not a topic discussed or understood within your home, family or culture. If the opposite is true, and you do have a personal experience and understanding, then perhaps you have encountered prejudice and stigmatising attitudes.

Please be compassionate with yourself, mindful of others and respect how our health changes from day to day. It is fluid and may flow from low energy to high energy at certain times of the month, year or seasonally. Revisiting the questions or activities when you feel at your best/most usual self can be useful and an effective tool for noticing how lower levels of energy and wellbeing show up for you.

Be aware of how your current stage of life influences your health and wellbeing and listen, to understand other people's experiences - especially if they are different to your own. It is important to highlight how you feel today as you read this toolkit. If you are experiencing poor or positive mental health, how are any health conditions, diagnosis or disability influencing your thoughts and feelings, or your ability to reflect and take part in any of the activities either alone or with others?

Therefore, please be considerate of how you plan to share this toolkit with others. Ensure you are respectful in the way that you discuss the themes with colleagues (particularly in larger meetings), and in your expectations of each other, especially if this is a new subject or topic of professional discussion.

VISIT THE EARLY YEARS WELLBEING WEEK WEBSITE FOR HELPFUL AND TRUSTED SOURCES OF INFORMATION
TO GUIDE YOU. [HTTPS://WWW.EARLYYEARSWELLBEINGWEEK.CO.UK/](https://www.earlyyearswellbeingweek.co.uk/)



CHAMPIONING WELLBEING STANDING UP FOR OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER

It is time to champion the health and wellbeing of our early years workforce and recognise mental health literacy as both a lifeline and life skill for those who choose and wish to establish a long-term career within a care giving profession. Mental health literacy means having good understanding and knowledge around mental health in order to aid recognition, management and prevention of poor mental health.

Every educator should be trained to protect themselves from the job-related stressors and pressures that working in early education brings. They should be supported to deal healthily with the demands of the role and to promote their own strategies for maintaining their health and wellbeing, so that they can participate fully and equitably at work.

Workplaces must do better when it comes to safeguarding staff wellbeing, and take seriously their responsibility to promote and maintain the health and wellbeing of their team. They must also improve their efforts to prevent health issues from developing or worsening by being alert to wellbeing risk factors and aware of the benefits that investing in staff wellbeing will bring to their community.

Take individual and collective action to champion educator wellbeing, by increasing mental health literacy and empowering self-efficacy, to cultivate inclusive mentally healthy working environments.

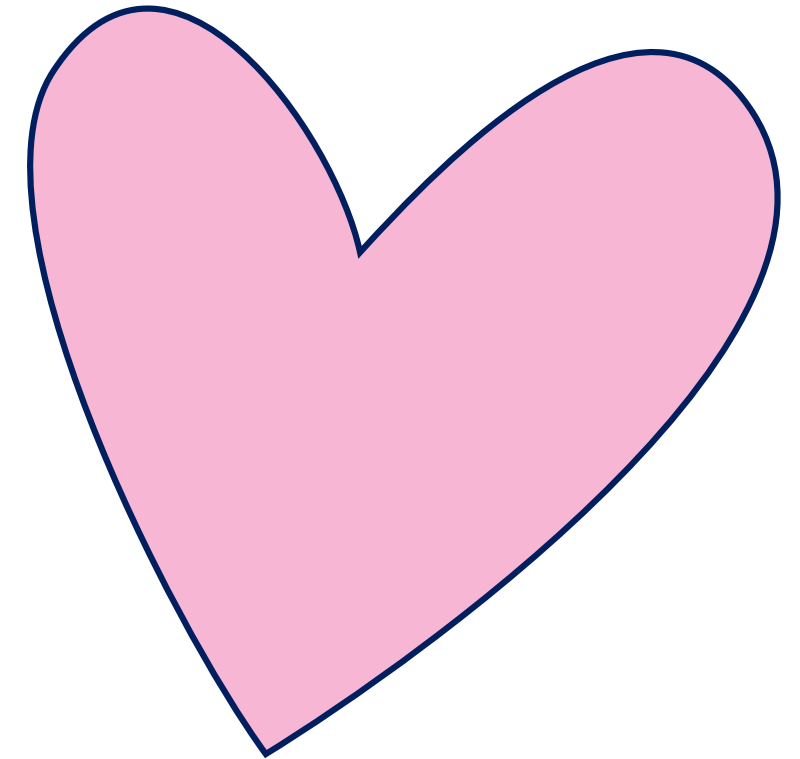
INTENTIONALITY TOWARDS BEING-WELL

A WELLBEING MANIFESTO

Early years educators are the **heart** of their setting.

Every early years educator **deserves** to feel:

- **psychologically safe** and **healthy** at work
- **supported** in their role
- **valued** as part of their **community**
- **happy** and **satisfied** at work



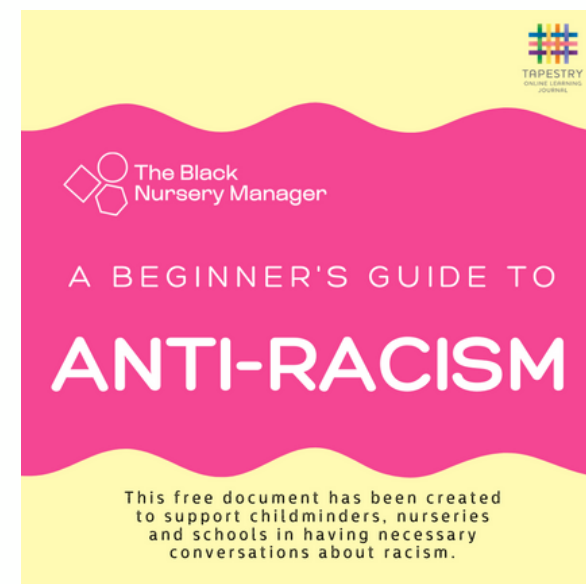
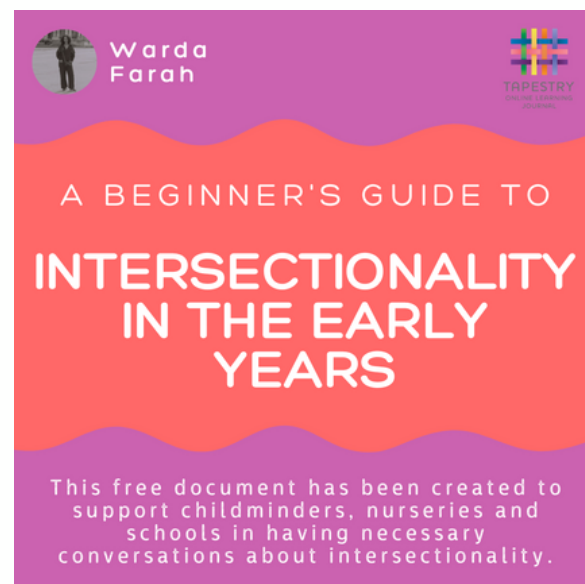
We cannot leave wellbeing to chance. We must act with intention and commit to a strategy for wellbeing. We must use the 'Three Pillars of Wellbeing' to build our mental health literacy and deepen our respect for the personal health, wellbeing and differences of educators. This will ensure that everyone can participate fully and equitably at work.

INTRODUCING INTERSECTIONALITY

CREATING SAFE SPACES FOR OUR PEOPLE

When we invest in the wellbeing of our people, getting to know them on a human level, we have the potential to bring about the health and harmony of a whole community. Professor Kimberlee Crenshaw coined the phrase **intersectionality**, formed from her research into feminism - particularly and significantly Black Feminism. It highlighted how our multiple identities overlap and intertwine to bring about multiple barriers and obstacles that can marginalise and oppress. In the current landscape of our society and indeed around the world, how is racism in all its forms (personal, cultural, structural, institutional) impacting the health of the people that form our community?

Are we making space and finding time to consider the health of our team and listen to what they might be experiencing due to inequalities (culturally, politically and economically) in our society? How might these inequalities compound to disproportionately affect their health? Get to know people as people: learn about their home and family life, identity and the specific lived experiences that they encounter and overcome. When we are making the time to do this, then we connect with each other on a deeper human level and therefore value unique contributions and celebrate differences.



DOWNLOAD THESE FREE
BEGINNER'S GUIDES.

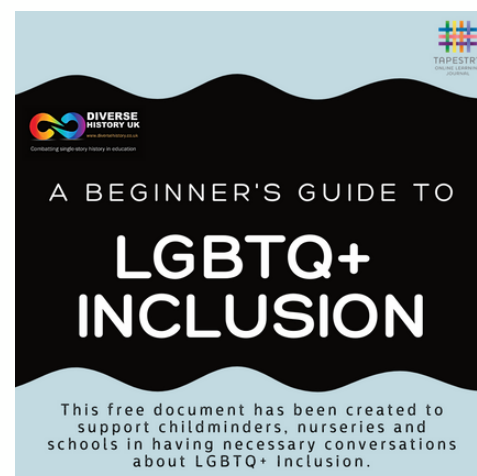
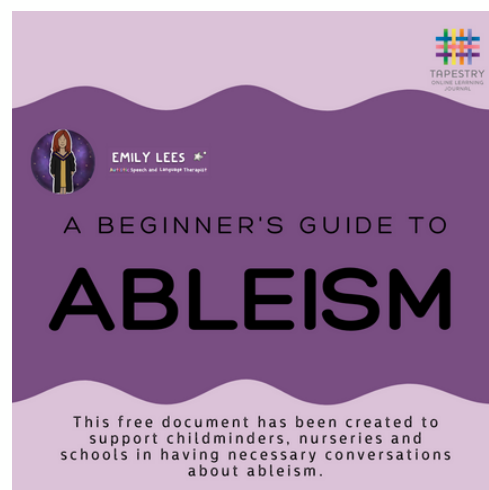
BEING OUR WHOLE SELVES IN A SAFE AND HEALTHY WORK SPACE

Let us consider how the cost-of-living crisis is affecting our workforce and how we can better take care of one another. When we are aware of the rates of pay and the minimum wage, we realise that our colleagues can also be reliant on benefits, support and food banks to care for their own families. How are we supporting each other in these times of difficulty?

In the current climate and rhetoric that is being targeted at the LGBTQIA+ community, what must it feel like to be queer, trans or non-binary entering the early years profession? How can we demonstrate allyship through our organisational values and everyday actions? We all have a part to play.

How does the stereotype of the early years as a woman's profession impact on our colleagues professional identity and self-esteem? For example, what does it feel like to show up in a place where you are the only male? What does it feel like to be minoritised in the space you work in? Or are you part of the dominant cultural majority? If this is the case, it is likely that the systems are most equitable for you but exclude others.

Are we considering our neurodivergent colleagues who are often overcoming invisible barriers and obstacles due to expectations to conform to neurotypical standards? How can we make space to affirm and celebrate differences and make adjustments? We are all uniquely and beautifully different. Can we all be our whole selves whilst being affirmed and celebrated?



**DOWNLOAD THESE FREE
BEGINNER'S GUIDES.**

WELLBEING AS A THREAD

HEALTHY WORKPLACES HELP US TO FLOURISH, RESPECT OTHERS AND
REACH OUR COLLECTIVE POTENTIAL

The relationship between leaders and their team members is key for the health and wellbeing of the whole organisation. Make the time to get to know and understand your people. Your commitment to educator wellbeing is at the heart of this purpose.

YOUR COMMUNITY

INCLUDE

Setting out your intent to cultivate a culture of wellbeing, to create mentally healthy workspaces.

YOUR LEADERS

CONNECT

Preparing your managers to appropriately support the wellbeing of their teams.



YOUR PEOPLE

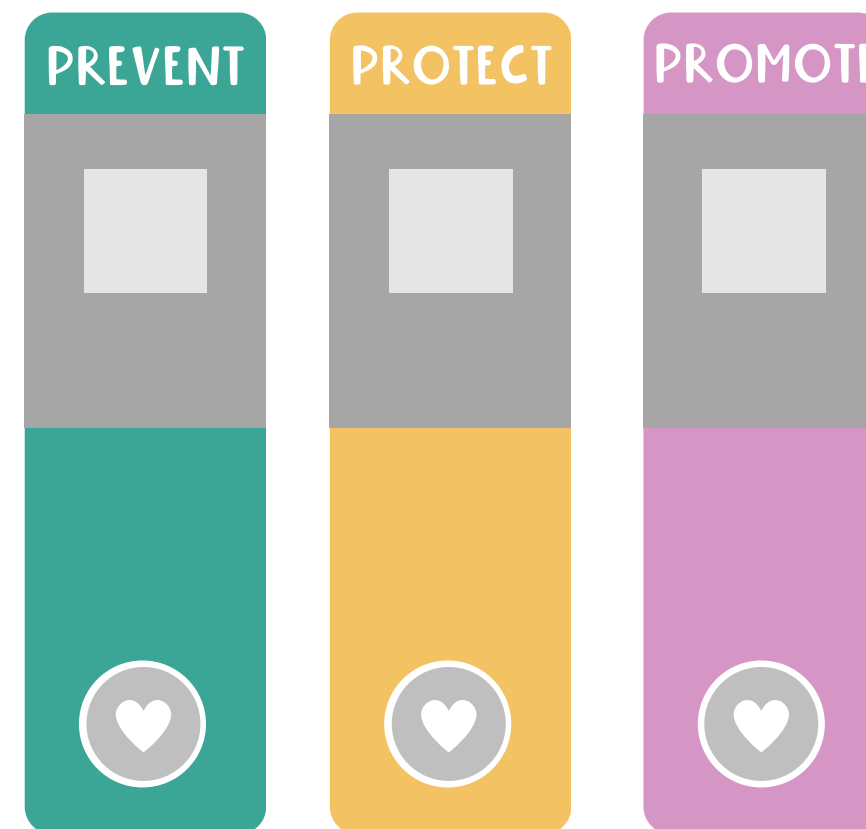
BELONG

Equipping your people with the skills to deal healthily with the demands of their work.

PURPOSEFUL PREVENTION

CHAMPION MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKSPACES, DEVELOPING PILLARS FOR WELLBEING

An effective workplace wellbeing strategy can deliver collective benefit for educators, children and your whole community.



PREVENT

Prevent mental health issues from
developing or worsening



PROTECT

Protect educator wellbeing from job
stressors & workload pressure



PROMOTE

Promote mental health literacy and
awareness of wellbeing



THE PILLARS OF WELLBEING

PROTECTING ENERGY, CARING AND COMPASSION

Advocate a philosophy for wellbeing that promotes the health of educators and sets a standard for safeguarding wellbeing at work.

For those working in early childhood education, it may look like:

- **PREVENT:**

- A commitment to increasing mental health literacy and awareness. Recognising stress and compassion fatigue in ourselves and each other and taking action to address wellbeing issues by minimising workload pressure and job stressors to prevent burnout.

- **PROTECT:**

- Creating positive working environments that value the conditions educators need to flourish by identifying and addressing workplace risk factors that pose barriers to maintaining wellness.

- **PROMOTE:**

- An equitable approach to improving and maintaining the physical, emotional, and mental wellness of educators (not just to be more productive but to seek a balance between work and home).

THE THREE P'S OF WELLBEING

GUIDANCE FOR LEADERS

PREVENT:

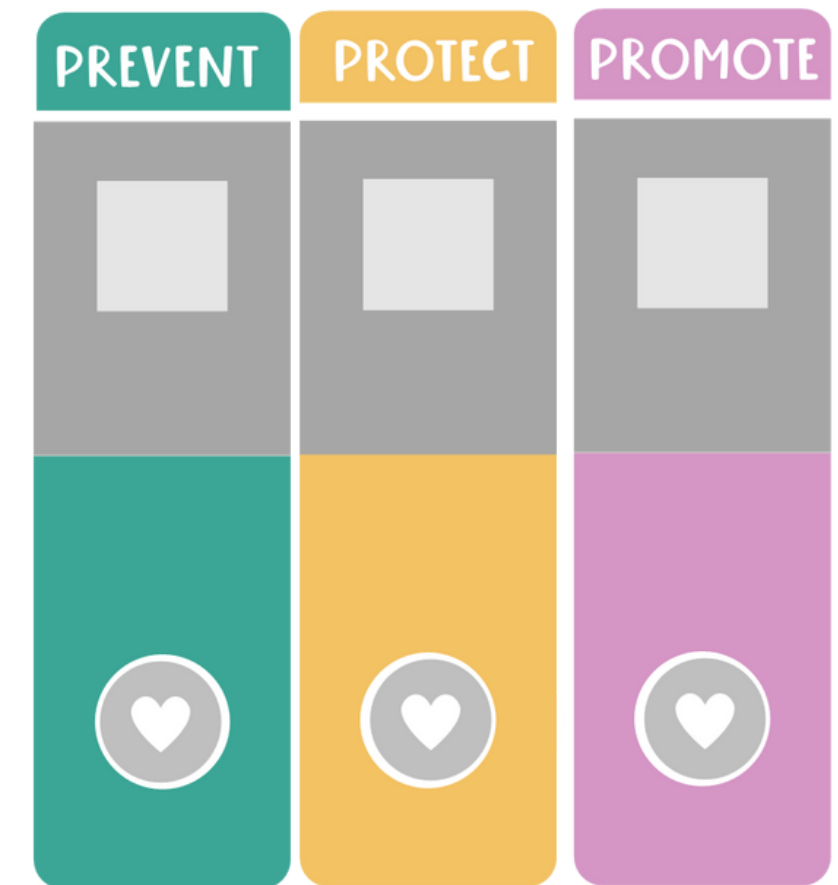
- Training improves mental health-related knowledge at work and the ability to recognise poor mental health.
- Line managers need knowledge and skills to protect, promote and support mental health, for example, knowing when and how to support a person when they need it.

PROTECT:

- Leaders need knowledge about:
 - wellbeing risk factors and how to address them
 - protective factors to improve work-related outcomes
 - confidence to seek organisational pathways of wellbeing support.

PROMOTE:

- Leaders should:
 - understand the conditions that employees need to flourish
 - build knowledge about self-help interventions
 - build knowledge about professional help available
 - develop attitudes that facilitate recognition and appropriate help-seeking behaviour.



WORKPLACE WELLBEING RISK FACTORS

If not addressed, over time, the risk factors that surround our workplace can have an impact on poor mental health and disproportionately affect the health of colleagues who live with a disability, health condition, or diagnosis.



REDUCING WELLBEING RISK FACTORS

BE ALERT TO THE DANGER OF STRESS

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as ‘the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them’ and is a natural response to anything that requires attention or action and can be defined as any type of change that causes physical, emotional or psychological strain.

Our stress response is meant to be helpful; it can help us push through fear so that we can deliver a speech or complete a learning walk during an Ofsted inspection! Stress is a signal alerting you to a threat or danger. You are meant to feel it! Do not ignore it, pay attention to the signals your body is sending you.

We all have our own unique tolerance to stress and some of us might be more vulnerable to stress. We can become unwell when the stress we experience is more than we can cope with. Stress is not an illness, but overtime, being stuck in a cycle of stress can cause adverse effects. Longer term, this can affect our physical and mental health, leading to compassion fatigue and burnout.

Cortisol is a hormone released in response to stress but it also plays an important and helpful role when functioning normally.

However, when stressors are always present and you constantly feel under attack, that fight-or-flight reaction stays turned on. Cortisol can then become rather unhelpful – especially to someone who works in a care giving role that requires a lot of energy.

Cortisol can:

- increase blood sugar levels.
- increase blood pressure.
- disrupt the sleep-wake cycle.
- weaken the immune system.
- increase inflammation.



REDUCING WELLBEING RISK FACTORS

CAN YOU SPOT ANY FAMILIAR SIGNS?

For example, educators may say that they:

- are not able to cope with the demands of their jobs
- are unable to control the way they do their work
- don't receive enough training, support or information to fulfil the role
- don't fully understand or carry out their role and responsibilities
- are having trouble with relationships at work
- are not engaged with the values or mission statement
- don't understand changes to the organisation or why they are happening



INDIVIDUALS

A change in the way someone acts, such as:

- taking more time off or arriving later for work
- appearing more twitchy or nervous

A change in the way someone thinks or feels, such as:

- mood swings
- being withdrawn
- loss of motivation, commitment or confidence
- increased emotional reactions - being more tearful sensitive or irritable

TEAMS

There may be signs of stress in a team, such as:

- arguments
- higher staff turnover
- more reports of stress
- more sickness absence
- decreased performance
- more complaints and grievances

REDUCING WELLBEING RISK FACTORS

BEING ALERT TO RECOGNISE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS IN EACH OTHER AND TAKING ACTION TO ADDRESS IT

HOW DOES STRESS SHOW UP FOR YOU?

Can you try to connect your thoughts, feelings and emotions to any physical symptoms and behaviour?

Physical sensations:

Thoughts/feelings or emotions:

Behaviours:

When you feel overwhelmed by stress what might other people notice?

ADDRESSING STRESS

Recognising signs of stress will help you to take steps to stop, reduce and address stress.

What do you complain the most about at work?

What part of the day/time of year feels the most stressful?

Have you ever felt uncomfortable or self-conscious at work because of your identity?

Do you have a trusted person at work, who will do right by you, has your back and is supportive?

HELPFUL STRATEGIES

Can you try to connect your thoughts, feelings and emotions to any physical symptoms or behaviour?

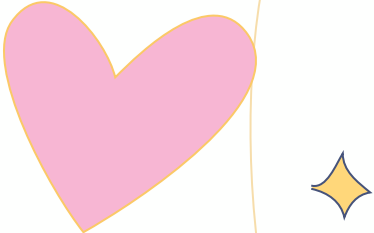
What are your go to strategies to relieve stress and tension?

What strategies help you reduce stress?

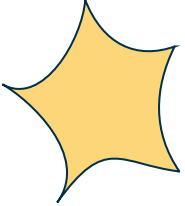
How do you keep those going when other pressures build up?

Do you recognise that you rely on any unhealthy coping strategies to release stress and what does this look like over time?

Who could help you?



WEAVING WELLBEING AS A THREAD



HEALTHY WORKPLACES HELP US TO FLOURISH, RESPECT OTHERS AND REACH OUR COLLECTIVE POTENTIAL

When educator wellbeing is at the heart of pedagogy and practice, it is a thread that weaves values into life, day in, and day out. This thread is repeatedly stitched into the fabric of your community - seen, heard and felt through caring, words, actions and behaviour.

Every little detail that takes place, is carefully considered and thoughtfully planned, even those that happen by chance or spontaneously in the moment. They can be unravelled and traced back to an educator who has a child in mind.

SHOUTING "SELF-CARE" AT PEOPLE WHO ACTUALLY NEED "COMMUNITY CARE" IS HOW WE FAIL PEOPLE.
-NAKITA VALERIO

In early years education, community care looks like:

- Respect for staff health and intent toward quality practice that values educator's health and wellbeing.
 - Staff are mental health aware, and wellbeing is part of everyday conversation.
 - Staff self-describe positive mental health and recognise signs and symptoms of poor mental health.
 - Collective alertness to wellbeing risk factors, aware of the threat stress poses to health.
 - Staff are supported and protected by organisational pathways of wellbeing support.
 - Staff seek help and can signpost colleagues, where appropriate to trusted sources of support and information.
 - Improved mental health literacy influences practice, modelled in everyday conversation and behaviour.
 - A commitment to wellbeing through clear strategy and wellness action planning.
- All staff, including line managers, demonstrate the importance of looking after their own wellbeing.

WELLNESS ACTION PLANNING

PREVENT + PROTECT + PROMOTE

NATIONAL SUPPORT

- Latest policy updates
- Government support & information
- Charities and organisations:
 - National Lottery
 - ACAS, Citizens Advice
 - Able Futures

IN HOUSE

- Accessible support & information
- Unions
- Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)
- HR support, Occupational Health
- Mental Health Training
- Wellness Action Plans:
 - practical support, cost of living, benefits schemes.

LOCAL OFFER

- Linking up with local strategy
- Community partnership
- Local charities & organisations & groups, peer support
 - www.hubofhope.co.uk

COMMUNITY OF CARE

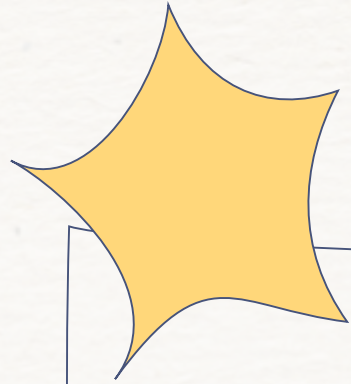
- Empowering a community of 'Wellbeing Champions' consisting of staff, parents, and children
- Develop a sharing and caring network to honour and model best practices
- Honour your core values and observe how they influence behaviour



IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE INITIATIVES YOU PUT IN PLACE, IT'S ABOUT MAKING SURE PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF THEM AND THAT THE WELLBEING SUPPORT BENEFITS THE WHOLE COMMUNITY, AND REACHES THE EDUCATORS WHO REALLY NEED IT.

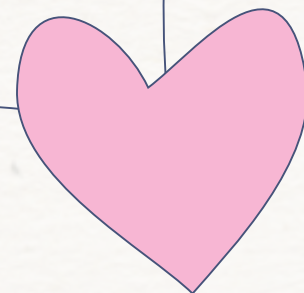
COMPASSION FATIGUE

OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD, OR SILENT EMERGENCY?



"THE DEEP PHYSICAL,
EMOTIONAL, AND SPIRITUAL
EXHAUSTION THAT CAN
RESULT FROM WORKING DAY
TO DAY IN AN INTENSE
CAREGIVING ENVIRONMENT."

WISE – initiative for stigma elimination.
<https://eliminatestigma.org/about-wise/>



Historically, educators have not been taught to protect their health from the demands and stress of a caregiving role or how to deal healthily with the daily pressure and workload that it brings.

We now know that educators carry a high stress-load and are vulnerable to experiencing emotional exhaustion and burnout (Herman et al., 2018). Compassion fatigue is described as the negative cost of caring and depletes energy, caring and compassion – the very skills needed to thrive - in both our professional and personal lives.

COMPASSION RESILIENCE

Think about compassion resilience as a tool for care-givers to take deliberate action and expect deliberate intention from employers to maintain physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing.

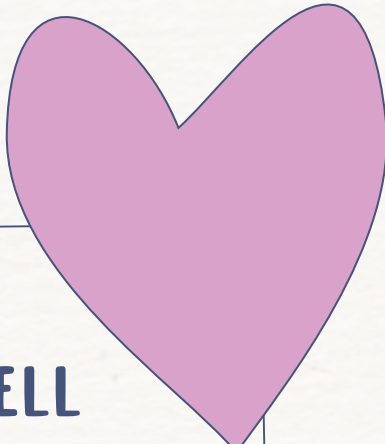
What does resilience mean to you?

Resilience Can be thought of as a 'bounce back ability' - it is learning how to bend not break, it is not about remaining strong 'no matter what'. It takes strength to say 'no', or that you made a mistake, or that you don't know, or that that you failed, or feel lost, stuck and overwhelmed.

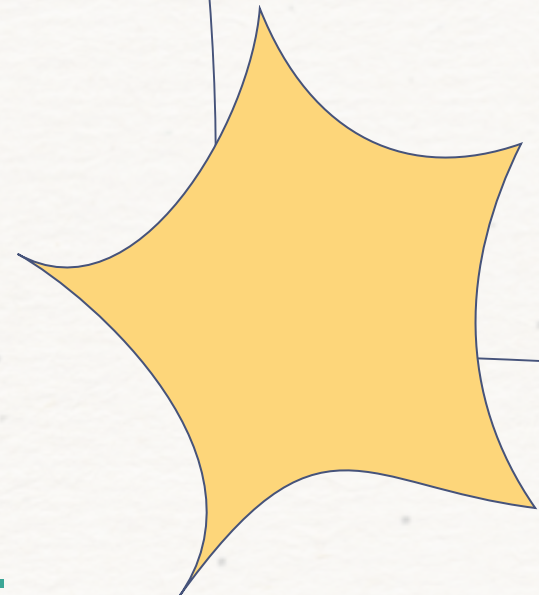
What does compassion mean to you?

Compassion is being aware of others' needs, stresses, worries or problems, and having a desire to do something to help - to take deliberate action and care about what happens next.

We need the support of other people to be resilient - the encouragement, psychological safety and reassurance of another. The same goes for compassion. Therefore, we cannot do this alone, we need each other to collectively care.



**"PEOPLE CAN'T BE WELL
IN SURVIVAL MODE.
IT'S NOT THE PERSON WHO IS SICK.
IT'S THE CULTURE.
MAY WE WAKE UP, HEAL OURSELVES,
AND BUILD CONSCIOUS COMMUNITIES
TO HELP EACH OTHER"**



Dr. Nicole LePera @Theholisticpsyc

BOUNDARIES

When we are feeling overwhelmed at work it is usually because we are under resourced in some capacity, so it makes sense that the demand or expectation required of us is unobtainable. Yet often we feel like we have come up short or we have unrealistic expectations of others which can lead to disappointment.

Continually feeling stressed, overwhelmed or experiencing burnout should not be a sign of how hardworking, kind or committed you are. We should care greatly if our workspace is surrounded by people who are expected to run themselves into the ground. It does not make you a better caregiver, leader or colleague – rather it indicates unhealthy boundaries and a neglect of the health and wellbeing considerations of your people. We can forgive ourselves and each other of the things we did not know before! Now we know better we can take action to do better.

Setting professional boundaries helps keep us safe and healthy and has the potential to empower our whole community. Boundaries can enable us to maintain appropriate behaviours and relationships with others but may be different based on our identity and vary from person to person when we consider, culture, race, gender, sexuality, disability, neurodiversity, our lived experience, personality and the context of the environment.

Setting boundaries in early childhood education should be respected as an essential component of practice that protects health, promotes professional self-care, can prevent health issues and encourages professional self-esteem. It has the potential to define our expectations of each other in our workspace, creates intentionality for work-life balance and importantly, sets boundaries for ourselves.

BURNOUT

- **Emotional exhaustion**

The fatigue that comes for caring too much for too long

- **Depersonalisation**

The depletion of empathy, caring and compassions

- **Decreased sense of accomplishment**

An unconquerable sense of futility: feeling that nothing you do makes a difference.

Herbet Freudenberger 1975 as cited in Burnout, Emily & Amelia Nagoski

SELF-CARE

**IN ORDER TO LOOK OUT FOR OTHERS, WE MUST LOOK AFTER OURSELVES.
(BUT NOBODY SAID IT WAS EASY – ACTUALLY, THEY DID!)**

What does self-care mean to you? What word pops into your mind? How is self-care different based on your identity? Consider stereotypical attitudes and behaviour towards socially acceptable or dominant cultural norms of self-caring.

Self-care is thought of as a practice that can both take care of our health and manage illness. Self-care is not all about the actions, nor is it a quick fix or a solution to burnout/poor mental health. The reality is that as adults we have less time to ourselves, and it makes self-caring difficult - many barriers block the way. It can make us feel overwhelmed or like a failure if we are always doing things for others and have little time to ourselves, especially if we compare ourselves to other people. Don't give yourself a hard time – rather, be compassionate towards your own personal obstacles that get in the way - remind yourself you did the best you could at the time.

Sometimes we may need a little reminder or the motivation from others to:

- Take care of our health
- Respect other people's health
- Discover new perspectives
- Keep going and growing

Barriers to self-care (differ from person to person):

- Gender identity, sexuality, disability, neuro-inclusion
- Lived experiences, adversity, trauma
- Time, money, access to community support
- Cultural considerations, accessibility, ableism
- Personal changes day to day, monthly, across the year

SETTING BOUNDARIES FOR COMPASSION RESILIENCE

WHAT DO I NEED TO BE DOING...

...TO FEEL AT MY BEST?

...TO FEEL HAPPY, HEALTHY AND COMFORTABLE IN MY OWN SKIN?

...TO FIND MY BALANCE BETWEEN WORK AND HOME?

COMMUNICATING YOUR NEEDS

Saying

- 'I will come back to you later this week with an answer'
- 'I don't respond to work emails after 6 pm'
- 'No'
- 'This is not something I feel comfortable doing'
- 'I'm not comfortable talking about this topic'
- 'I need quiet time to myself right now'

MAINTAINING HEALTH

- Having a proper lunch break
- Fueling your body - water + nutrition + rest
- Making some adjustments at work - asking for support
- Simplifying routines to reduce workload pressure + stress

COMPASSION RESILIENCE

IF YOU HAVE AN HOUR TO
YOURSELF WHAT WOULD BE YOUR
FAVOURITE THING TO DO?

PEOPLE WHO HAVE MY BACK



MY SELF-CARE
FUNDAMENTALS

WHAT BRINGS ME JOY AND LIFTS MY MOOD?

WHAT CHANGES MY HEALTH
THROUGHOUT THE YEAR?



POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH
FOR ME

SIGNS OF POOR MENTAL HEALTH

WHAT TRIGGERS STRESS FOR ME?



PROFESSIONAL
SELF-CARE

MY BOUNDARIES

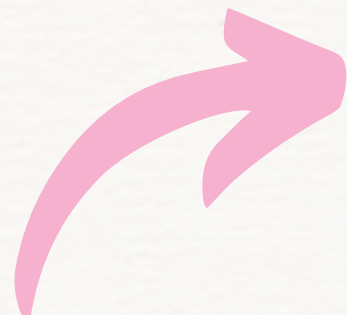
WHAT MATTERS TO YOU?



OUR VALUES ARE THINGS WE BELIVE IN AND THEY ARE IMPORTANT IN
EVERYDAY LIFE TO THE WAY WE LIVE, LOVE AND WORK

Circle the words that resonate most with you and add your own

KIND	CARING	PATIENT	EMPATHETIC	HONEST
FAIRNESS	LOVING	PROFESSIONAL		BRAVE
NON-JUDGEMENTAL	AMBITIOUS	RELIABLE		STRONG
SPIRITUAL	FLEXIBLE	OPEN-MINDED		DARING
SINCERE	ADVENTUREOUS	INTEGRITY		JUSTICE
FAIRNESS	FAITH	CONNECTION	CURIOUS	LOYAL
DEPENDABLE	INCLUSIVE	TRUSTWORTHY		HEALTH
GROWTH	JOY	RESILIENT	ALLY	COMPASSION
INTUITIVE	GRACE	EMPOWERING		DIVERSITY
COMFORT	BELONGING	FITNESS		ALTRUSIM
COLLECTIVISM	HEALTH	EQUITY		VULNERABILITY



Are you moving
towards things that
are important to you?

How do your values, align with
your everyday words,
behaviours & actions?

Personally; health, family,
relationships.

Professionally; contribution.

MY VALUES & QUALITIES

LIFE GETS BUSY, WE FACE CHALLENGES AND ADVERSITY

SOMETIMES WE CAN REALISE WE HAVE BEEN DRAWN IN ANOTHER DIRECTION AND OUR ACTIONS ARE NOT ALIGNED WITH OUR VALUES AND WHO WE WANT TO BE

Describe your job role and responsibilities?

What values and qualities do you need to work in early years education?

What support do you need to fulfil your role?

Describe your home life, roles and responsibilities, commitments, hobbies, education, training etc...

What and who is important to you?

How do you take care of yourself so you can fulfil these roles and responsibilities?

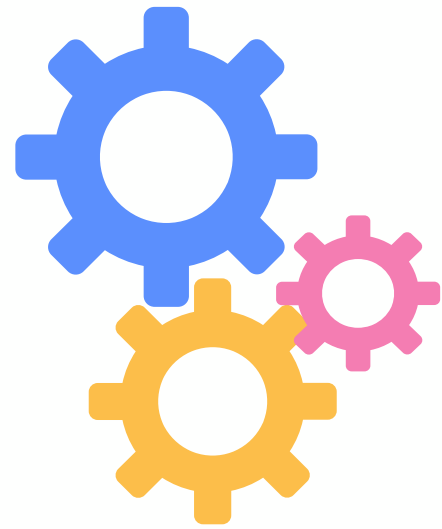
Who takes care of you?

Who could help you?

What thing would you like to do differently?

What one thing would you change?

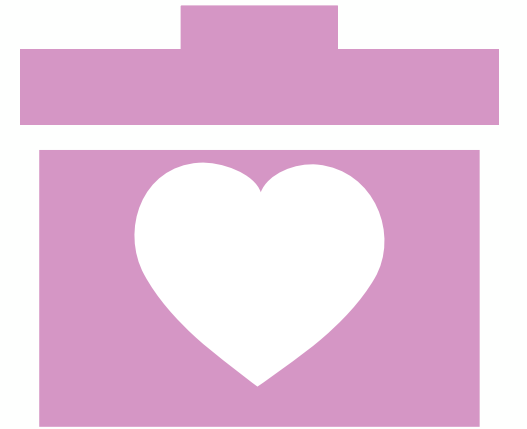
What one thing could you stop?



WHAT'S IN **YOUR** WELLNESS TOOLKIT?

THINK OF IT AS YOUR OWN PERSONAL SELF-CARE KIT

RESPECTING YOUR HEALTH
HONOURING PROFESSIONAL SELF-CARE



If you read the [Beginners Guide To Wellbeing](#), you may know there are times when we all need to boost our mental health. Wellbeing is not a one size fits all approach. Respecting identity and understanding intersectionality to cultivate connection, belonging and inclusion in our workspaces is critical when considering any wellbeing initiatives or events. Further reading in the [Tapestry Beginners Guides](#) can be found here.

CAN YOU THINK OF THREE THINGS THAT YOU WOULD PUT IN YOUR SELF-CARE KIT?

OR IF THAT FEELS OVERWHELMING, TRY TO THINK OF WHAT YOU WOULD OFFER TO A FRIEND, FAMILY MEMBER, COLLEAGUE, OR LOVED ONE?

This kit can be something that you turn to when you need a boost, helping you to address stress and release some of the stressors that may feel overwhelming. It's about:

- Finding the tips and strategies that work best for you when you are not feeling yourself: what can you do to feel a little better?
- Thinking about what would be in your kit to use as a resource to promote and maintain wellbeing.
- Asking yourself what is going on for me when I feel at my best?

BEING ME BEING-WELL

What is usual and typical for you? Being healthy and well is not about living without a disability, health condition or diagnosis. Rather it is a consideration of your wellbeing and being aware of the fluid nature of your health. Many people have positive mental health with a diagnosis of a mental health condition, while others experience poor mental health without diagnosis. The reality is that many people take their health for granted and often it is people living with specific health requirements or needs who have greater self-awareness, emotional intelligence and compassion for others.

Can you provide a description of:

- Your own positive mental health? What does it look, feel and sound like?
- Symptoms of poor mental health in yourself? Thoughts, feeling, emotions, behaviour & actions and any physical signs & symptoms?
- Actions that protect your wellbeing at work – boundaries, self-caring, pathways of support?
- How your identity shapes your ability to engage in self-caring actions?



IDENTITY IS ESSENTIAL FOR
OUR OVERALL WELLBEING.

WE SHOULD CARE ABOUT
THE WAY OUR IDENTITY
MAKES US DIFFERENT AND
CONSIDER ADJUSTMENTS
THAT TAKE ACCOUNT OF
THESE DIFFERENCES.



JOYFULNESS

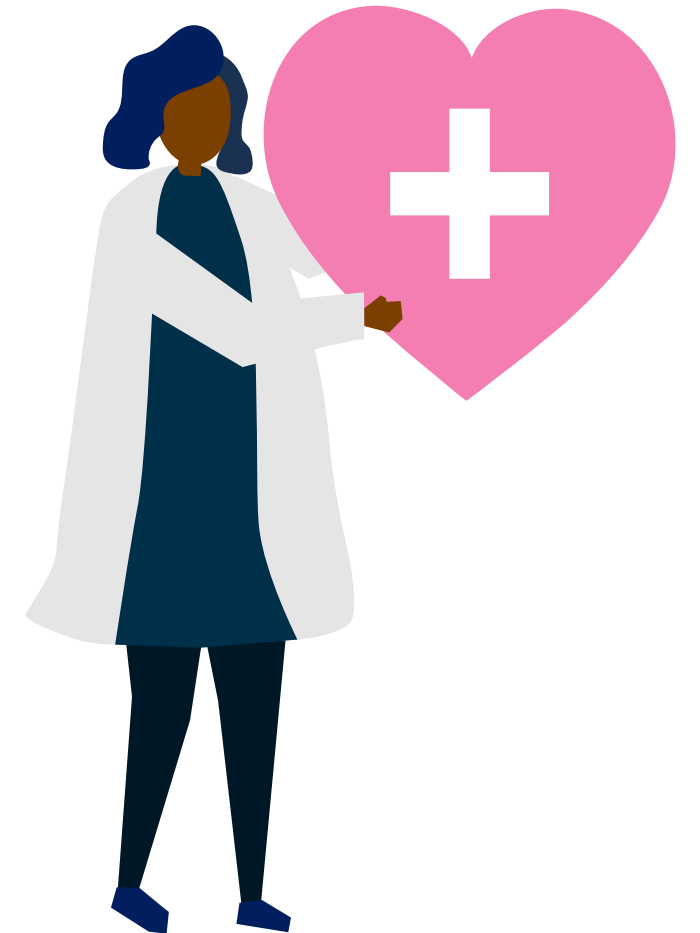
Can you think of three things that make you feel joyful?

HOW OFTEN DO YOU DO SOMETHING JUST FOR YOU?

- Write them down.
- Pin up it up somewhere.
- See if you can do them across your week.
- Use them as a gentle reminder to focus on what matters to you.
- Add to them when you discover more.

NOTICE

- When you feel at your best.
- What have you been doing.
- Are you moving towards things that are happy healthy & helpful for you?



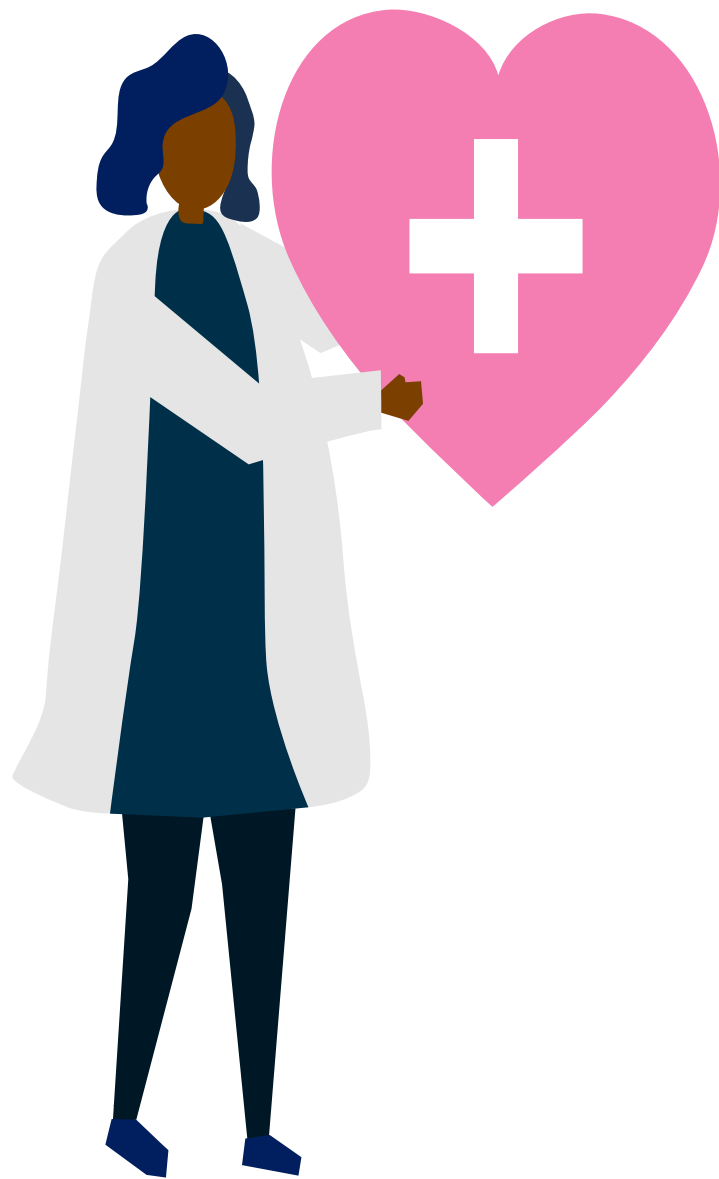
EVERYDAY ACTIONS THAT CAN BOOST OUR WELLBEING

‘The New Economics Foundation’ developed the evidence-based public health messages, ‘the Five Ways to Wellbeing’ (FWTW).

These message can have a positive impact on our mental wellbeing, be a helpful tool to address stress and a reminder of helpful self-caring coping strategies.

1. Connect with others – reach out to that old friend, or make plans to connect with colleagues, family, neighbours or people in your community.
2. Be active. Move your body because you love your body. Find an activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life. You don’t have to be good at it to enjoy it!
3. Keep learning. Every day is a learning day. Is there something you have always wanted to do and always put off? Sign up for that course, join that book club, do it today!
4. Give to others. Your time, words or presence. You might already do this A LOT in your day job. As educators perhaps this is the one area we don’t need to focus on as much as the others!
5. Be mindful. Reflect on experiences that matter to you. Notice how you feel when you're at your best. Live in the moment. Some people call this ‘mindfulness’.

CULTIVATING MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKSPACES



Collective-care is the practice of developing mentally healthy strategies that seek to prevent health issues from developing or worsening, as well as protect and promote the wellbeing of our communities. It is at the heart of our purpose. We recognise self-care alone is not enough. We need community care to thrive.

For those working in early childhood education, protective factors may look like:

- Employee Assistance Programmes that include health care, counselling, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, benefits schemes, union or national early years organisation memberships and participation.
- Appropriate line manager training to conduct professional and impactful performance management discussions, including return to work and reasonable adjustments.
- Access to worthwhile respectful, reciprocal supervisions, 1:1, appraisal, induction/onboarding programmes and mentorship.
- Effective interventions to address stress, reduce workload and pressure.
- Equitable workspaces that embed consistency, promote trust, respect and dignity.
- Shut-down days for staff professional development, team building and wellbeing initiatives.
- Issues with staffing, conflict or wellbeing issues are addressed quickly, fairly and consistently and impact positively on staff engagement, professional relationships and length of service.

A CASE STUDY

Read this case study. What would you say to Polly if she was your colleague or friend?

Polly is experiencing a lot of stress in her job role as a room leader, she has been working for the same nursery for 8 years and is finding it increasingly difficult to manage and motivate the team in the baby room. She feels like she is beginning to shoulder more and more of the responsibility and workload.

When she tries to address this with the nursery manager, they had little time to listen to Polly's concerns because the deputy manager is on maternity leave and training the new deputy is taking up a lot of her time. However, they are quick to notice if her planning isn't submitted or observations have not been uploaded.

Polly starts staying later to make sure she has got everything done and is also coming in early in the morning. Lately she has started waking up in the night for hours at a time, leaving her feeling exhausted in the morning. She has little time to eat breakfast before she drops off her own children to the childminder and at lunch she just about has time to have a cup of tea or a pot noodle - often just grabbing what she can.

Lately, she has less energy, especially at the weekend. Her partner is complaining she never wants to do anything, Polly has been experiencing headaches and started feeling a tightness and pain in her chest and a feeling of dread on a Sunday when she thinks of the week ahead. She has started to think that she is failing at everything - especially with her kids and at work.

WELLNESS ACTION PLANNING

Do I have any pre-existing or diagnosed health conditions or any other health issues?

Do I take any medication? How long have I taken it. Do I have any side-effects?

What helps me stay healthy?

What am I like when I am well?

What do I need to do every day to stay well or keep on track with my goals?

How do I want to feel as I navigate this situation and maintain my wellness?

Are there any situations that may trigger poor mental health?

What new stress am I aware of?

What can I do to take care of the things that are worrying me?

What existing stress may need my attention right now?

How can my workplace support me right now?

What could my line manager do to support and/or adjust?

What are the things that I enjoy, that bring me joy and happiness and that I can use to lift my mood?

Who can I rely on at home to support me if I need someone to turn to?

COLLECTIVE CARE OBSERVABLE IN EARLY YEARS ENVIRONMENTS

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Before you start, do your everyday actions align with your values and beliefs? It doesn't matter if you have a vision statement that sets out your intent, if it is not observable in everyday practice, and if members of your community do not understand or honour it themselves. Are you working towards things that matter and are important to you?

How do we show respect for ourselves and each other?

Do we value staff contributions?

How do we elevate and empower our team?

Do we hold high aspirations of and for each other?

Do you feel a sense of belonging as part of a community?

Do you feel pride in your workplace community?

Do you feel proud of the quality of the care we provide?

What does it sound like when you stop and listen to your environment? How does it feel? What is the energy like here? Is it different at certain times of the day?

Would you say staff morale is high?

How is it observable in your early years environments, interactions and daily actions?

Is there a commitment to wellness action planning?

How do line managers remove barriers that are wellbeing risk factors, that deplete energy, caring and compassion? Can you give an example?

As a staff team are you mental health aware?

How does performance management empower help-seeking and promote work-life balance?

Do we take actions to establish and maintain professional boundaries?

Do we champion wellbeing and is it unique to each individual member of the team or community?



FOR MY FUTURE SELF WHEN I NEED A REMINDER

MY "IN CASE OF BURNOUT KIT"

"Nobody knows how to love you better than you"

Brittany Long @brything

To use on the days when you need a little reminder of how wonderful you really are! The idea is that if you are lacking in energy, self-care or compassion, you can take care of yourself by offering your own words of wisdom, love and care. Please be aware it may feel harder to complete when you are experiencing poor mental health or a change in your usual levels of wellbeing and fitness.

Use these ideas to remind and guide you:

Write your own pep talk.

Write a list of people who love you and you can trust - gather supportive notes from these loved ones.

Make a list of self-soothing activities when everything feels too much.

Make a list of things that make you smile.

Make a list of things you have achieved for when your self-esteem is low.

Make a list of professional accomplishments for when your professional self-esteem is low.

Inspired by Brittany Long @brything.

WELLBEING AS A THREAD

When educator wellbeing is **valued** at the heart of your community, it is the **thread** that loops and **weaves** your people, **values** and intentions together, allowing them to **grow**, thrive and **come to life**.

