Introduction to

Teacher Wellbeing

WORKSHOP #2

Name:
Take a few minutes out of your day, wherever you are, to colour your way to peace and calm! When colouring, we activate different areas of our two cerebral hemispheres. The action involves both logic, by which we colour intricate, sophisticated patterns, and creativity, when selecting colours. The relaxation that it provides lowers the activity of the amygdala, a part of our brain involved in controlling emotion that is affected by stress. In Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the mandala (taken from the Sanskrit word for circle) is a visual representation of the universe, believed to aid focus in meditation and to promote a feeling of balance. Here is one for you to colour in.
Managing Stress

Relaxation
- meditation
- deep breathing exercises
- visualisation
- aromatherapy
- massage

Exercise
- stretch
- swim
- walk
- run
- yoga
- kick boxing

Nutrition
- eat a well-balanced diet
- drink plenty of water
- avoid processed foods
- avoid over-eating
- reduce caffeine consumption

Goals
- set small achievable goals along the way
- keep track of progress
- celebrate reaching milestones toward accomplishing goals

Rest
- get plenty of sleep
- periodically take breaks to rest your mind and body
- avoid sleeping pills

Coping
- meet challenges head on
- do not fall into a pattern of avoidance behaviour

Communication
- express your feelings rather than bottling them up
- keep a journal
- talk with friends/family
- participate in counselling or therapy

Stress management is the process of learning about your stress triggers and finding out which techniques work best for you to lower your stress levels.

What are the practical strategies you can adopt to manage stress in your life?
# Discussion Stress

## Signs and Symptoms of Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Emotional</th>
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<tr>
<td>dry mouth</td>
<td>sudden irritability</td>
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<tr>
<td>difficulty breathing</td>
<td>tension</td>
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<tr>
<td>pounding heart</td>
<td>difficulty sleeping</td>
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<tr>
<td>stomach ache</td>
<td>narrowed perception</td>
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<tr>
<td>headache</td>
<td>frequent feelings of fatigue</td>
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<tr>
<td>diaphoresis</td>
<td>feeling overwhelmed</td>
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<tr>
<td>frequent urination</td>
<td>problems with concentration, focus and decision making</td>
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<tr>
<td>tightening of muscles</td>
<td>anger</td>
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<tr>
<td>shaky legs and/or hands</td>
<td>emotionally reactive</td>
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<tr>
<td>loss of appetite/binge eating</td>
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## Activity Recognising Stress

1. List the ways you experience stress physically, emotionally and behaviourally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physically</th>
<th>Emotionally</th>
<th>Behaviourally</th>
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2. Circle the ways stress affects you that are most troubling.

3. List two or three things you can do to reduce these symptoms. Or list times when you notice these symptoms are less intense.

   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
Activity Identifying your Stress Triggers
What to do in a crisis

A crisis can present in many different forms, from the death of a loved one, to the loss of a job, to the collapse of a marriage, to financial disaster. When you are hit by a crisis, an emotional storm is likely to whip through your mind and body, tossing painful thoughts and feelings in all directions. Here's what you can do to survive and thrive: STOP.

**Slow your breathing**
- Take a few deep breaths, and mindfully observe the breath flowing in and flowing out. This will help to anchor you in the present.

**Take note**
- Take note of your experience in this moment. Notice what you are thinking. Notice what you are feeling. Notice what you are doing. Notice how your thoughts and feelings are swirling around, and can easily carry you away if you allow them.

**Open up**
- Open up around your feelings. Breathe into them and make room for them. Open up to your thoughts too: take a step back and give them some room to move, without holding onto them or trying to push them away. See them for what they are and give them space, rather than fusing with them.

**Pursue your values**
- Once you’ve done the above three steps, you will be in a mental state of mindfulness. The next step is to respond to the crisis by pursuing a valued course of action. Connect with your values: ask yourself, ‘What do I want to be about, in the face of this crisis? What do I want to stand for? How would I like to act?’

Things to Consider

1) Do you need, or would you benefit from help/assistance/support/advice? If so, what friends, neighbours, or relatives can you contact? What professionals could you arrange to see? (If necessary, what helpline numbers could you call?)

2) Have you experienced anything similar before? If so, how did you respond that was useful and helpful in the long term? Is there anything you learned from that experience that you can usefully apply now?

3) Is there anything you can do to improve the situation in any way? Are there any TINY steps you could take immediately that could be helpful? What are the smallest, simplest, easiest, tiny steps you could take:
   a) in the next few minutes
   b) in the next few hours
   c) in the next few days

4) If there is nothing you can do to improve the situation, then are you willing to practice acceptance, using expansion and diffusion skills, while engaging fully in the present moment? And given that the situation is unchangeable, how can you spend your time and energy constructively, rather than worrying or blaming or dwelling? Again, reconnect with your values: what do you want to be about in response to this situation? What are some tiny values-driven steps you can take?

5) You don’t get to choose the deck of cards you are dealt in life; you only get to choose how you play with them. So a useful question to ask is: ‘Given this is the hand I’ve been dealt, what’s the best way to play with it? What personal strengths can I develop or strengthen as I go through this ordeal? How can I learn and grow from this experience?’ Note: *any painful experience is an opportunity to develop your mindfulness skills.*

6) Be compassionate to yourself. Ask yourself, ‘If someone I loved was going through this experience, feeling what I am feeling – if I wanted to be kind and caring towards them, how would I treat them? How would I behave towards them? What might I say or do?’ Then try treating yourself the same way.

Simple Mindfulness Tips

‘Stop and breath’ – 15 seconds of Mindfulness

"We just stop whatever we're doing and take three to five mindful breaths". A mindful breath is a slow, deep breath during which you focus your mind on your breathing. This extremely simple technique is particularly effective when you're feeling upset or stressed. But because of the way our minds spin along, gaining speed as we zoom through the workday, it’s useful any time. It will help slow your speeding mind and improve your concentration. As our minds become agitated, it's hard for us to focus, and it's a time investment you can make on even the busiest of days, since the entire process takes no more than about 15 seconds.
5 minute Mindful breathing - How to do it

The most basic way to do mindful breathing is simply to focus your attention on your breath, the inhale and exhale.

Find a relaxed, comfortable position. You could be seated on a chair or on the floor on a cushion. Keep your back upright, but not too tight. Hands resting wherever they’re comfortable. Tongue on the roof of your mouth or wherever it’s comfortable.

Notice and relax your body. Try to notice the shape of your body, its weight. Let yourself relax and become curious about your body seated here—the sensations it experiences, the touch, the connection with the floor or the chair. Relax any areas of tightness or tension. Just breathe.

Tune into your breath. Feel the natural flow of breath—in, out. You don’t need to do anything to your breath. Not long, not short, just natural. Notice where you feel your breath in your body. It might be in your abdomen. It may be in your chest or throat or in your nostrils. See if you can feel the sensations of breath, one breath at a time. When one breath ends, the next breath begins.

Be kind to your wandering mind. Now as you do this, you might notice that your mind may start to wander. You may start thinking about other things. If this happens, it is not a problem. It’s very natural. Just notice that your mind has wandered. You can say “thinking” or “wandering” in your head softly. And then gently redirect your attention right back to the breathing.

Stay here for five to seven minutes. Notice your breath, in silence. From time to time, you’ll get lost in thought, then return to your breath.

Check in before you finish. After a few minutes, once again notice your body, your whole body, seated here. Let yourself relax even more deeply and then offer yourself some appreciation for doing this practice today.

Practical Reminders for living your life as if it really matters

Traffic lights

Every time you are stopped, use it as an opportunity to ‘breath’. Just, move all your attention to your breathing and enjoy a few mindful breaths. Notice the sense of spaciousness you create when you stop the commentary in the mind – even briefly.

Standing in a queue

This can be a great chance to check your posture and notice how you are standing? Is your back uplifted and your shoulders down, your heart open, your head up or are you slouched and clenched. What are you embodying? You may choose to make some adjustments and notice the difference this makes to how you feel immediately.

In a conversation

Notice if you are listening and attending to the other person fully? Or are you caught up in a story in your head, preparing your answer, distracted by your phone… You can actually listen fully – to the sound / tone of their voice, their body language while having a sense of your own presence – your feet on the floor, the aliveness in your body.

Eating a meal or having a cup of tea

Why not taste it? Smell it? Feel the heat of the cup in your hand? Savour the pleasure of eating / drinking / resting.

(http://www.mindfulnessatwork.ie/living-your-life-as-if-it-really-matters/)
The following meditation brings the body into clear focus as you scan from the tips of your toes to the crown of your head, becoming aware of the sensations your body is experiencing. You can practise this meditation from the comfort of your chair or couch, or lying flat on the floor or in your bed. Keep a blanket nearby in case you start to feel cold.

Spend the first few moments getting comfortable. Arms should be resting softly either side of your body, or on your lap. Quietly settle by tapping into, or sensing, then natural rhythm of your breathing. Using the ‘clench and release’ method, relax your body into the floor or the chair. Breathing in, tense the muscles in the body: hands, toes, stomach, buttocks, chest, shoulders, thighs, then release with an exhale breath, allowing your entire body to sink down into the floor/chair.

Spend a few minutes become aware of your body, softening so that every part is relaxed and comfortable. Do you need to adjust your neck, or shoulders, or hips? Can you uncross your legs, or let your hands soften, palms falling open? Observe how your newfound relaxed state makes you feel: perhaps this is the first time you have felt truly calm all day? Or it might prompt you to realise how much tension you were subconsciously carrying in your body.

Take your attention to the tips of your toes and begin to work your way upwards, through all the points in your legs: ankles, shins, calves, knees, thighs. Notice any sensations that immediately spring to mind, and spend a moment here to relax the legs and feet deeply.

Working your way up further still, until you reach your hips, bring your focus here to ensure that you are not holding any stress here. As you reach your tummy, allow it to soften with every breath. This is where we hold much of our emotions: worry, pain, sorrow. See if you can allow the belly to expand and contract with every breath, allowing it to remain soft.

Now take your attention to your arms, your elbows, your wrists, your hands; give your fingers a little wriggle to connect with the meditation and to anchor your focus. Can you feel any sensations here? Can you allow the arms to soften, fingers falling open, palms facing up?

Bring your attention to your chest area, noticing how it rises and falls with the rhythm of your breathing. Has it become softer? Are you comfortable as you lie on the floor or sit in the chair? If you notice any discomfort here, simply adjust your position accordingly. Observe your shoulders. Here is where we carry stress. Allow your shoulders to become soft with every breath, rolling them up and back, and letting them settle softly. Take your focus to the face, the space between the eyebrows where the nose meets the forehead, the cheeks, the jaw. Gently loosen the jaw left and right, lift the eyebrows up and down, smile or yawn. Soften the face. Spend a few moments now focusing on the whole body, becoming fully mindful of every sensation, present in your experience. This meditation is an opportunity to think about the body in a more observant way, and to remind ourselves to be continually mindful of our bodily wellbeing.

From Meditation Made Easy, by Stephanie Brookes
Activity  Mountain Meditation

This meditation is normally done in a sitting position, either on the floor or a chair, and begins by sensing into the support you have from the chair or the cushion, paying attention to the actual sensations of contact. Finding a position of stability and poise, upper body balanced over your hips and shoulders in a comfortable but alert posture, hands on your lap or your knees, arms hanging by their own weight, like heavy curtains, stable and relaxed. Actually sensing into your body, feeling your feet… legs… hips… lower and upper body… arms… shoulders… neck… head…

And when you are ready, allowing your eyes to close, bringing awareness to breath, the actual physical sensations, feeling each breath as it comes in and goes out… letting the breath be just as it is, without trying to change or regulate it in any way… allowing it to flow easily and naturally, with its own rhythm and pace, knowing you are breathing perfectly well right now, nothing for you to do… Allowing the body to be still and sitting with a sense of dignity, a sense of resolve, a sense of being complete, whole, in this very moment, with your posture reflecting this sense of wholeness… (long pause).

As you sit here, letting an image form in your mind’s eye, of the most magnificent or beautiful mountain you know or have seen or can imagine…, letting it gradually come into greater focus… and even if it doesn’t come as a visual image, allowing the sense of this mountain and feeling its overall shape, its lofty peak or peaks high in the sky, the large base rooted in the bedrock of the earth’s crust, it’s steep or gently sloping sides… Noticing how massive it is, how solid, how unmoving, how beautiful, whether from a far or up close…(pause)

Perhaps your mountain has snow blanketing its top and trees reaching down to the base, or rugged granite sides… there may be streams and waterfalls cascading down the slopes…there may be one peak or a series of peaks, or with meadows and high lakes… Observing it, noting its qualities and when you feel ready, seeing if you can bring the mountain into your own body sitting here so that your body and the mountain in your mind’s eye become one so that as you sit here, you share in the massiveness and the stillness and majesty of the mountain, you become the mountain.

Grounded in the sitting posture, your head becomes the lofty peak, supported by the rest of the body and affording a panoramic view. Your shoulders and arms the sides of the mountain. Your buttocks and legs the solid base, rooted to your cushion or your chair, experiencing in your body a sense of uplift from deep within your pelvis and spine.

With each breath, as you continue sitting, becoming a little more a breathing mountain, alive and vital, yet unwavering in your inner stillness, completely what you are, beyond words and thought, a centred, grounded, unmoving presence… As you sit here, becoming aware of the fact that as the sun travels across the sky, the light and shadows and colours are changing virtually moment by moment in the mountain’s stillness, and the surface teems with life and activity… streams, melting snow, waterfalls, plants and wildlife. As the mountain sits, seeing and feeling how night follows day and day follows night. The bright warming sun, followed by the cool night sky studded with stars, and the gradual dawning of a new day…
Through it all, the mountain just sits, experiencing change in each moment, constantly changing, yet always just being itself. It remains still as the seasons flow into one another and as the weather changes moment by moment and day by day, calmness abiding all change...

In summer, there is no snow on the mountain except perhaps for the very peaks or in crags shielded from direct sunlight. In the fall, the mountain may wear a coat of brilliant fire colours. In winter, a blanket of snow and ice. In any season, it may find itself at times enshrouded in clouds or fog or pelted by freezing rain. People may come to see the mountain and comment on how beautiful it is or how it’s not a good day to see the mountain, that it’s too cloudy or rainy or foggy or dark.

None of this matters to the mountain, which remains at all times its essential self. Clouds may come and clouds may go, tourists may like it or not. The mountain’s magnificence and beauty are not changed one bit by whether people see it or not, seen or unseen, in sun or clouds, broiling or frigid, day or night.

It just sits, being itself.

At times visited by violent storms, buffeted by snow and rain and winds of unthinkable magnitude.

Through it all, the mountain sits.

Spring comes, trees leaf out, flowers bloom in the high meadows and slopes, birds sing in the trees once again. Streams overflow with the waters of melting snow. Through it all, the mountain continues to sit, unmoved by the weather, by what happens on its surface, by the world of appearances... remaining its essential self, through the seasons, the changing weather, and the activity ebbing and flowing on its surface...

In the same way, as we sit in meditation, we can learn to experience the mountain, we can embody the same central, unwavering stillness and grounded-ness in the face of everything that changes in our own lives, over seconds, over hours, over years. In our lives and in our meditation practice, we experience constantly the changing nature of mind and body and of the outer world, we have our own periods of light and darkness, activity and inactivity, our moments of colour and our moments of drabness.

It’s true that we experience storms of varying intensity and violence in the outer world and in our own mind and bodies, buffeted by high winds, by cold and rain, we endure periods of darkness and pain, as well as the moments of joy and uplift, even our appearance changes constantly, experiencing a weather of its own...

By becoming the mountain in our meditation practice, we can link up with its strength and stability and adopt them for our own. We can use its energies to support our energy to encounter each moment with mindfulness and equanimity and clarity.

It may help us to see that our thoughts and feelings, our preoccupations, our emotional storms and crises, even the things that happen to us are very much like the weather on the mountain. We tend to take it all personally, but its strongest characteristic is impersonal.

The weather of our own lives is not be ignored or denied, it is to be encountered, honoured, felt, known for what it is, and held in awareness... And in holding it in this way, we come to know a deeper silence and stillness and wisdom.

Mountains have this to teach us and much more if we can let it in...

So if you find you resonate in some way with the strength and stability of the mountain in your sitting, it may be helpful to use it from time to time in your meditation practice, to remind you of what it means to sit mindfully with resolve and with wakefulness, in true stillness...

So, in the time that remains, continuing to sustain the mountain meditation on your own, in silence, moment by moment, until you hear the sound of the bells...

Audio Version read by Tara Kileen (Soul Space, Carrick-on-Shannon) available at https://youtu.be/bCLUoQs0uIE
Activity  Loving Kindness Meditation

To practise loving-kindness meditation, sit in a comfortable and relaxed manner. Take two or three deep breaths with slow, long and complete exhalations. Let go of any concerns or preoccupations. For a few minutes, feel or imagine the breath moving through the centre of your chest – in the area of your heart. Loving kindness is practised towards oneself, since we often have difficulty loving others without first loving ourselves. Sitting quietly, mentally repeat, slowly and steadily, the following or similar phrases: **May I be happy. May I be well. May I be safe. May I be peaceful and at ease. (Repeat)**

While you say these phrases, allow yourself to sink into the intentions they express. Loving-kindness meditation consists primarily of connecting to the intention of wishing ourselves or others happiness. However if feelings of warmth, friendliness, or love arise in the body or mind, connect to them, allowing them to grow as you repeat the phrases. As an aid to the meditation, you might hold an image of yourself in your mind’s eye. This helps reinforce the intentions expressed in the phrases.

After a period of directing loving-kindness towards yourself, bring to mind a friend or someone in your life who has deeply cared for you. Then slowly repeat phrases of loving-kindness towards them: **May you be happy. May you be well. May you be safe. May you be peaceful and at ease. (Repeat)**

As you say these phrases, again sink into their intention or heartfelt meaning. And if any feelings of loving-kindness arise, connect the feelings with the phrases so that the feelings may become stronger as you repeat the words.

As you continue the meditation, you can bring to mind other friends, neighbours, acquaintances, strangers and animals. Then slowly repeat phrases of loving-kindness towards them: **May you be happy. May you be well. May you be safe. May you be peaceful and at ease. (Repeat)** You can either use the same phrases, repeating them again and again, or make up phrases that better represent the loving-kindness you feel towards these beings. Sometimes during loving-kindness meditation, seemingly opposite feelings such as anger, grief, or sadness may arise. Take these to be signs that your heart is softening, revealing what is held there. You can either shift to mindfulness practice or you can – with whatever patience, acceptance and kindness you can muster for such feelings – direct loving kindness toward them. Above all, remember that there is no need to judge yourself for having these feelings.

*Loving Kindness Meditation* script from [http://www.mettainstitute.org/mettameditation.html](http://www.mettainstitute.org/mettameditation.html)

Guided audio version available at [https://youtu.be/sz7cpV7ERsM](https://youtu.be/sz7cpV7ERsM)

(Images from Thich Nhat Hanh on pinterest.com)
What are mindful movements?
Mindful movements help us to find peace within ourselves. One way you can develop peace in yourself is by meditating: just sitting quietly and breathing. But sometimes we need to stop sitting in one place and start moving around! Mindful movement is meditation in motion. When you need to take a moment to find inner peace, perhaps in response to an incident or simply as a mindful part of your day, select some of the following movements and repeat each one three times.

Mindful Movement #1
Begin with your feet slightly apart, arms at your sides. Breathing in, keep your elbows straight as you lift your arms in front of you until they are shoulder level. Breathing out, bring your arms down by your side.

Mindful Movement #2
Begin with your arms at your sides. Breathing in, lift your arms in front of you. In one continuous movement, bring them all the way up, stretching them above your head. Touch the sky! Breathing out, bring your arms slowly down again to your sides.

Mindful Movement #3
Breathing in, lift your arms out to the side, palms up, until your arms are shoulder level. Breathing out, touch your shoulders with your fingertips, keeping your upper arms horizontal. When you breathe in, you are like a flower opening to the warm sun. Breathing out, the flower closes. Repeat, then lower your arms.

From: Mindful Movements, Ten Exercises for Wellbeing, by Thich Nhat Hanh
Sr. Michael Rutter defines resilience as

Relative resistance to environmental risk experiences

Or

The overcoming of stress or adversity

Or

A relatively good outcome despite risk experiences.

Resilience is the capacity to maintain equilibrium and a sense of commitment and agency in the complex, intense, unpredictable and unavoidable uncertainties of our school/working world, as well as the ability to bounce back, recover from trauma, the capacity to survive and thrive in often extremely adverse circumstances.

Glu and Day, 2012

Model of Resilience

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<tr>
<th>I have</th>
<th>I can</th>
<th>I am</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trusting relationships</td>
<td>Communicate</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to health, education, welfare, and security services</td>
<td>View stresses as problems to be solved</td>
<td>Lovable (worthy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capacity to draw on my faith and cultural history</td>
<td>Engage in goal setting (TATs!)</td>
<td>Loving, empathetic and altruistic (caring, kind, compassionate)</td>
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<td>Demonstrated self-efficacy in my life and in my work</td>
<td>Find meaning and purpose in life</td>
<td>Proud of myself</td>
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<td>Make a gift of my survival to others</td>
<td>Realistically optimistic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gauge temperament of myself and others</td>
<td>Autonomous and responsible</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Manage my feelings and impulses</td>
<td>Filled with hope, faith and trust</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Stay calm even under pressure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Use acceptance and tolerance strategies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Be mindful of the present</td>
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<td>Laugh</td>
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Activities Resilience

1. What comes to mind for your model of resilience?

2. What are your individual strategies for increasing resilience?
# The Cognitive Approach

1. Think of a situation you have experienced recently (one that challenged you, at a low level). Describe the detail briefly – date, time, situation.

2. Identify the emotion(s) you felt. Be as accurate as you can. Distinguish, for example, between mildly irritated and annoyed.

3. Describe your thoughts that led to your emotion(s).

4. Were there other ways you could have seen the situation? What alternative thoughts or interpretations might have been possible?

5. Next time...
Mental Health Ireland – Building Resilience

Building resilience means developing individual strengths and abilities to ‘bounce back’ from challenges and setbacks that life presents us with. It involves being able to adapt to changes, drawing on both our strengths and the available social resources to assist us during times of stress. Developing a greater level of resilience doesn’t stop difficult or stressful things from happening, but it can reduce the impact these events have on our lives and the time taken to recover from them.

10 Tips for Building Resilience

**Have the courage to be imperfect.**
Try to aim for ‘not bad at all’ or ‘really quite good’ instead of ‘perfect’.

**Laugh out loud each day.**
Laughing reduces stress levels, so look for opportunities to introduce some humour into your day.

**Take time for yourself.**
Allow yourself time to do things that you enjoy. Create boundaries around your time and stick to them.

**Get a good night’s sleep.**
You will feel more resilient and able to handle the stresses of the day when you’ve had a good night sleep.

**Sign up for that course, join that club.**
Getting involved in community activities can enhance your skills and boost your physical and mental wellbeing.

**It’s all about team work!**
Tackle difficult tasks first, learn to ask for help and accept all offers.

**Be active every day in as many ways as you can.**
Being physically healthy is an important foundation for your resilience.

**Remember, this too shall pass.**
Keep things in perspective. Avoid being overly negative about things. Try and focus on the things you can control.

**Spend time with people who make you feel good.**
Having supportive relationships is a key factor in resilience. Good friendships are as important as romantic and family relationships.

**Talk out your troubles**
If you let friends and family know when times are tough, they may be able to provide a range of support. This could include listening, advice or providing practical support. Sometimes you may need to talk to a professional.

“...The strongest oak of the forest is not the one that is protected from the storm and hidden from the sun. It is the one that stands in the open where it is compelled to struggle for its existence against the winds and rains and the scorching sun”.

*Napoleon Hill (1883 – 1970)*
Mental Health is the emotional and spiritual resilience which enables us to enjoy life and to survive pain, disappointment and sadness. It is a positive sense of well-being and an underlying belief in our own and other’s dignity and worth.

Health Education Authority, 1997

Mental Health is a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. Mental health is more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities. Mental health and well-being are fundamental to our collective and individual ability as humans to think, emote, interact with each other, earn a living and enjoy life.

World Health Organisation, 2014

Mental Health is broader than an absence of mental disorders. Poor mental health affects our ability to cope with and manage our lives, particularly during personal change and through key life events, and decreases our ability to participate fully in life. Mental health is an essential component of general health, which it underpins. Most experts consider mental health as a continuum. Thus, the quality of an individual’s mental health may have many different possible levels. Concepts of mental health include, for example, the ideas of subjective well-being, personal autonomy, and the ability to realise one’s potential in life.

A Vision for Change, 2006

What does mental health mean to you?
### Mental Health – Risk and Protective Factors

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<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>ADVERSE FACTORS</th>
<th>PROTECTIVE FACTORS</th>
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<td><strong>INDIVIDUAL</strong></td>
<td>• Low self-esteem</td>
<td>• Self-esteem and confidence</td>
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<td>• Difficulties communicating</td>
<td>• Communication skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Medical illness, substance use</td>
<td>• Physical health and fitness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Manage stress</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL</strong></td>
<td>• Loneliness, bereavement, family conflict</td>
<td>• Social support of family and friends</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Low income and poverty</td>
<td>• Economic security</td>
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<td>• Work stress, unemployment</td>
<td>• Satisfaction and success at work</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ENVIRONMENTAL</strong></td>
<td>• Injustice and discrimination</td>
<td>• Tolerance and integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Social and gender inequalities</td>
<td>• Social and gender equality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**World Health Organisation** – Risks to Mental Health: an overview of vulnerabilities and risk factors – August 2012

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**Activity**  
Risk and Protective Factors

Identify your own adverse and protective factors by completing the following template:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>ADVERSE FACTORS</th>
<th>PROTECTIVE FACTORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDIVIDUAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENVIRONMENTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why build your resilience?

Although being resilient does not prevent difficult or stressful things from happening it can help reduce the impact that these events have on our lives and the time taken to recover from them.

Being resilient does not mean ignoring your emotions or feelings, but rather experiencing grief, sadness, disappointment or anger, whilst maintaining perspective and continuing on in life with a sense of hope.

Resilience involves our behaviours, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed by anyone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Realise your potential</td>
<td>Express yourself</td>
<td>Sign up for that course</td>
<td>Involve yourself in your community</td>
<td>Link in with others</td>
<td>Invest your time wisely</td>
<td>Embrace life, the good and the bad</td>
<td>Never stop trying</td>
<td>Capitalise on opportunities</td>
<td>Enjoy life!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mental Health Ireland (2013)
One step, and then another,
And the longest walk is ended;
One stitch and then another,
And the largest rent is mended.
One brick upon another,
And the highest wall is made;
One flake upon another,
And the deepest snow is laid.

Then do not look disheartened,
O'er the work you have to do,
And say that such a mighty task,
You never can get through;
But just endeavour, day by day,
Another point to gain;
And soon the mountain which you feared,
Will prove to be a plain.

'Rome was not built within one day'
The ancient proverb teaches;
And Nature, by her trees and flowers,
The same sweet sermon preaches.
Think not of far-off duties
But of duties which are near;
And having once begun to work,
Resolve to persevere.
Activity  The Wheel of Life

Take a visual snapshot of your life as it exists in the present moment. Life is, by its very nature, multifaceted. The most powerful and lasting approaches to growth and healing encompass all aspects of your being. Taking stock of your life and acknowledging and accepting where you are right now is a requisite first step to engaging in transformation. Assign a rating from one to ten for each of these areas, starting each time in the centre of the circle.

The bad news is, time flies.
The good news is, you’re the pilot.
My personal and professional Toolkit

Health is our most valuable possession. Mental Health includes the way we feel and our ability to deal with challenges and cope with change.

The Wellbeing Toolkit can be seen as self-care support to help you to enjoy life to the full, to cope with challenges or difficulties if and when they arise and to embrace opportunities.

Reflect on:

- What do I have in my Toolkit to support my Mental and Emotional Health and Wellbeing?
- What else do I need? What can I add?

Sample Wellbeing Toolkit for self-management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supports I can call on</th>
<th>Things I do for others and myself</th>
<th>Things to add to my toolkit over time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Body language-smile</td>
<td>Skill to Ask for Help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Helpful thinking</td>
<td>Skill to keep in touch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies</td>
<td>Accepting appropriate advice</td>
<td>Skill to eat well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Acceptance</td>
<td>Ability to be calm and in control</td>
<td>Skill to drink sensibly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals</td>
<td>Sleep well</td>
<td>Skill to keep active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>Accepting challenges</td>
<td>Skill to talk about feelings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Skill to identify problem
Further Supports

Employee Assistance Scheme (EAS)

CareCall Wellbeing

① 1800 411 057 ☝ carecallwellbeing.ie

The purpose of the EAS is to provide teachers and their family members with easy access to confidential counselling and to assist in coping with the effect of personal and work related issues. The service is available to teachers whose positions are funded by the Department of Education and Skills, their spouses or partners, their dependents above the age of 16 and mother/father where appropriate.

National Counselling Service

① 1850 241 850

☝️ http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/Mental_Health_Services/National_Counselling_Service/

Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

① 01 2303536

☝️ www.irish-counselling.ie

Remember, support, guidance, resources and information are also available from a variety of organisations such as Aware, The Samaritans, Pieta House, A Lust for Life, Marie Keating, the Irish Cancer society, the Rape Crisis Centre and many more.