Staff Wellbeing

North Ayrshire Council Educational Psychology Service

What is wellbeing?

➢ In order to support staff wellbeing effectively we need to have a clear understanding of what we mean by wellbeing.

➢ Wellbeing can be described as our holistic health, including our physical, mental and emotional health (Garland et al., 2018). When we have good levels of wellbeing, we feel that life is in balance and that we can generally cope well.

Please note that references to 'staff' in this document refer to staff in educational settings.

Why is wellbeing important?

Wellbeing of teachers is important not only in and of itself but also in the fact that better teacher wellbeing has been associated with improved student wellbeing and lower student distress (Harding et al., 2019).

Did you know?

Wellbeing researchers have traditionally emphasised one of two complementary perspectives when considering individuals' feelings of well-being in general (Bartels et al., 2019):

The hedonic perspective

Rooted in the idea that the good life is created by maximising pleasure and minimising pain (Feldman, 2004).

The eudaimonic perspective

Rooted in the idea that wellbeing is enhanced by a focus on individual flourishing and fulfilment of one's potential. (Erdogan et al., 2012).

➢ Both these perspectives are highly correlated, however around 50% of the population are likely to score highly on one but not both (Keyes et al., 2002). Both perspectives are therefore important in the understanding of staff wellbeing.

➢ Eudaimonic wellbeing is based on six dimensions of psychological wellbeing: self-acceptance, positive relations, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. See self-actualisation and self-determination theory for more information.

➢ For more information see here

How does all this link with psychological theory?

Self-determination Theory

Self-determination theory assumes individuals are inherently prone toward psychological growth and integration, and emphasises 3 key areas for wellbeing - *autonomy, competence, and relatedness (*Deci & Ryan, 2008).

- ➢ **Autonomy** is defined as the need for individuals to feel in control of their own behaviours and goals.
- ➢ **Competence** involves mastery and the sense that one can succeed and grow.
- ➢ **Relatedness** occurs where individuals have a sense of belonging and connection, facilitated by respect and caring.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

Intrinsic – related to internal sources of motivation such as a need to gain knowledge or independence.

Extrinsic – related to external rewards such as financial gain and gratification from others.

Self-determination theory research has focused on the importance of intrinsic goals; an emphasis on intrinsic goals, relative to extrinsic goals, is associated with greater health, wellbeing, and performance (Vansteenkiste et al., 2004).

Positive psychology

Positive psychology is the scientific study of the strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive.

Research by Seligman et al. (2005) suggested that by focusing on character strengths, individual's happiness increased, and depressive symptoms decreased.
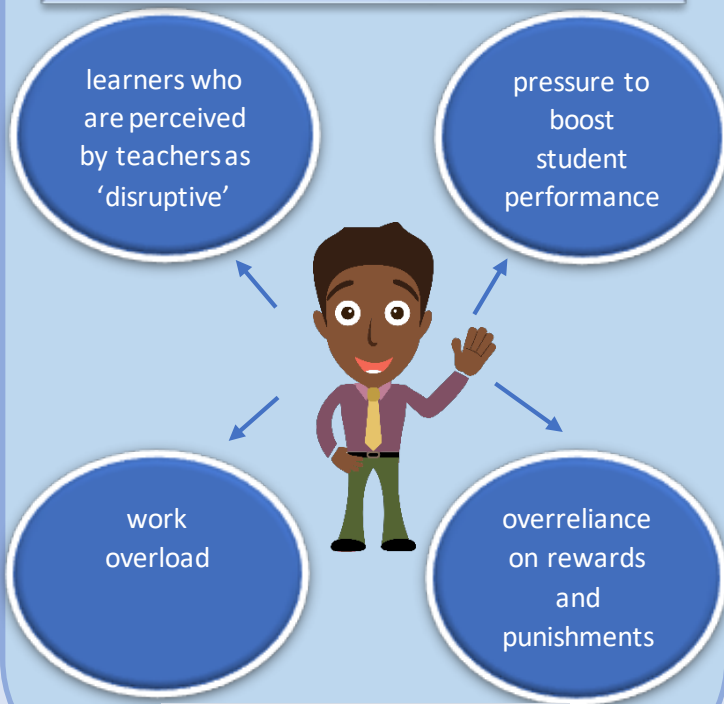
Self-actualisation

Continuous lifelong process whereby an individual's self-concept is maintained and enhanced via reflection and the re-interpretation of various experiences which enable the individual to change and develop (Rogers, 1951).

Theories of motivation

McLean's (2003) 'Motivated School' approach highlights three main areas of need for learners: **affiliation** (relatedness); **agency** (competence) and **autonomy**. These needs can also be applied to adult learners such as school staff. McLean outlines what can occur if these core needs are not met, e.g. alienation, apathy, learned helplessness, anxiety, and low resilience.

What gets in the way of wellbeing?

- learners who are perceived by teachers as 'disruptive'
- pressure to boost student performance
- work overload
- overreliance on rewards and punishments

Pelletier et al. (2002); Fernet et al. (2012)

For more information in supporting a culture of positive staff wellbeing please click the links below:

So what can help?

➢Wellbeing isn't just about feeling good, it is about feeling able to flourish and fulfil our potential.

➢Relationships are key. Schools should consider how they allow staff opportunities to interact in lots of different ways.

➢Staff having a collective view on how much impact they have is important. Spending time together reflecting on what is going well and what works to support pupils can be helpful.

➢Staff need to have autonomy in their work and be trusted to get on and do their job with the right amount of support when needed. This has implications for leadership and how staff are supported.

➢Feeling competent is important for staff wellbeing. Staff training and development opportunities are crucial particularly in any areas that require new skills and knowledge.

➢Positive psychology may be a helpful way to focus on staff strengths and improve their wellbeing.

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