



Leveraging MTSS in the Classroom: Thriving in Teaching: Wellness Practices for Educators

Presenters

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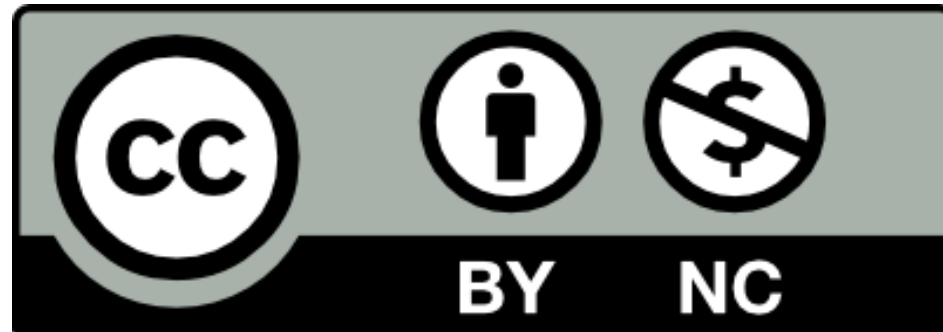


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Purpose

Educator wellness matters. This session focuses on proactive strategies to manage stress, prevent burnout, and reduce compassion fatigue, helping teachers thrive while supporting students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioral health.

Intended Outcomes

- Understand why teacher wellness matters
- Reflect and identify personal wellness needs
- Consider daily routines to support emotional regulation and wellness over time

Agenda

1.0 Why Teacher Wellness Matters

2.0 Wellness Practices

3.0 Regulation and Wellness

4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps

1.0 Why Teacher Wellness Matters

Teacher Motivation

- What motivated you to pursue a career in teaching?
- According to data from the FIT-Choice framework the strongest predictors of choosing teaching as a career are:
 - intrinsic motivations, e.g. a personal passion for teaching or for a certain subject area
 - altruistic “social utility” motivations, e.g., wanting to help children and contribute positively to society

Watt and Richardson, 2007

Teacher Burnout

- Teachers are **twice as likely to report frequent job-related stress** and **three times as likely to report difficulty coping with it** compared to similar working adults
- 44% of teachers report feeling burned out often or always
 - Heavy workloads: lesson planning, grading, meetings
 - Emotional labor: supporting students' social and emotional needs
 - Classroom management challenges
 - Balancing their professional and personal responsibilities

RAND, 2024 and Gallup, 2022

Burnout is Not Inevitable!

With the right:

- Awareness
- Boundaries
- Support
- Wellness practices



You Can't Pour From an Empty Cup

- Teaching is one of the most rewarding yet demanding professions
- To thrive in this profession, teachers must prioritize their own wellness, both to perform at their best and to support students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioral health needs.

2.0 Wellness Practices

Teacher Wellness Practices

- Self-awareness
 - Recognizing signs of stress and burnout
- Boundaries
 - Protecting your time and energy
- Personal Wellness
 - Proactive strategies to manage stress, prevent burnout, and reduce compassion fatigue
- Support Networks
 - Colleagues, mentors, and professional communities

Self-Awareness: Noticing the Early Signs

- Recognizing stress early can be helpful in preventing burnout
- Common signs teachers report:
 - Feeling constantly exhausted
 - Irritability or loss of patience
 - Difficulty disconnecting from work
 - Feeling ineffective or overwhelmed
- What are some common signs that you are personally getting overwhelmed?

How Do You Respond to Stress?

Flight

Withdraw
Avoid tasks
Avoid people
Become easily distracted
Appear tired, shut down, or disengaged

Fight

Show verbal aggression (scream or yell)
Show physical aggression
Appear hyperactive
Become easily frustrated or irritable

Freeze

Exhibit numbness
Avoid meeting your own needs
Give blank looks
Feel unable to move or unable to act

Fawn

Apologize excessively
Take on too much responsibility
Try to please others
Avoid conflict



Activity 2.1

Pause and Reflect:

- Think of a recent stressful moment that you faced. What was your first early warning sign?
- Which stress response do you tend to demonstrate most?
 - Flight, fight, freeze, or fawn
- How can these reflections help you in the classroom?

Activity 2.2

Imagine your ideal school year:



- Managing a classroom of diverse learners
- Supporting students academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally
- Lesson planning, grading assignments
- Building relationships with students, families, and colleagues

Boundaries

- Time is a finite resource. Boundaries help maintain long-term sustainability in teaching.
- Examples:
 - Define your work hours
 - Establish communication windows
 - Prioritize tasks and commitments
- What are the things you can prioritize to protect your time and energy?

Personal Wellness

- Teacher wellbeing affects student outcomes
- Self-care is not selfish, it is essential for professional sustainability
- Examples:
 - Social self-care: connect with others
 - Emotional self-care: understand, identify, and regulate your feelings
 - Behavioral self-care: embrace behaviors that positively impact your physical wellness
- What are some things that have helped you feel well in the past?

Personal Wellness Examples

In the Moment

- Breathing exercises
- Stretching
- Grounding activities
- Mindful moments

Long Term

- Meditations
- Gratitude practices
- Exercise
- Connecting with a mentor
- Therapy, counseling, and/or support groups

Work Specific

- Taking intentional, full lunch breaks
- Have a calming object at your desk
- Have a pre-class grounding routine and a between-class class reset
- After-work decompression plan

Support Networks

- Strong relationships can reduce stress and burnout
- Support can come from:
 - Colleagues
 - Grade-level teams
 - Mentors or instructional coaches
 - Professional learning communities
- Who can you go to for support?



Activity 2.3

Pause and Reflect:

- Think about your future students.
- When you're at your best (energized, patient, and fully present), what do you want them to *see*, *hear*, and *feel* in your classroom?
- What will your students experience because you're showing up that way?

When prompted, share in the chat:

- In my classroom, I will prioritize...so that my students will experience...

3.0 Regulation, Wellness, and the Classroom

Why Support Regulation for Staff

- Regulated staff are better able to attend to the Social, Emotional, Behavioral Health (SEBH) needs of students
- It helps create a safe, consistent, and predictable learning environment for students and staff
- It increases overall teacher well-being
 - Reduces stress
 - Increases job satisfaction
 - Supports staff in being more empathetic when working with students, helping to reduce vulnerable decision points

Staff
regulation

- Educators who are **regulated** are able to show empathy

Empathy

- Educators have to show **empathy** in order to form relationships with students

Student
regulation

- Relationships are required to help someone else **regulate and de-escalate**

Activity 3.1

- Get Ready
 - Reflect on your intentions for this school year.
- Get Set
 - What is one strategy you can use in the moment to stay grounded and regulated?
 - What is one habit you want to build over time to support your wellness?
- Go
 - Set your intentions:
 - One thing I can do in the moment is...and one thing I will build over time is...

4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps

Key Takeaways

- Teachers are at-risk for burnout and report higher-than-average levels of job-related stress
- Burnout is not inevitable. It is predictable and therefore preventable.
- With proactive awareness, good boundaries, strong support, and effective wellness practices, teachers can sustain their passion for teaching long-term
- Regulation is an important aspect of teacher wellness
- Regulated educators are better able to positively impact student outcomes

Next Steps

- Stay connected with the TA Center
 - Join our listserv, follow our social media pages
- Participate in additional professional learning
 - On Demand
 - EduPaths
 - YouTube
 - Microlearning
 - Professional Learning Sessions
 - In-person
 - Virtual

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