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**How leaders can help their teams look after their wellbeing in challenging times**



# How leaders can help their teams look after their wellbeing in challenging times



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Many of you will be doing whatever you can to stay physically well in these very difficult times. It is also a time to be looking after your psychological wellbeing and that of your teams. It is no exaggeration to say that the anxiety level of the world population will have increased as a result of what is going on right now. It's also true that this is a time when we can learn new ways of doing things, connect and share with one another to use our experiences positively now and in the future.

The Bupa Foundation Wellbeing for Educators programme can help you, and your team, to stay mentally well. This guide gives leaders top tips to help teams manage their Performance Energy through these challenging times.



Everyone is dealing with new and ever changing circumstances, especially you as educators. This means there's a new level of concern and anxiety around your own health, the people you care about and the students and colleagues at school. We also know that sadly some educators are dealing with bereavement as well.

This guide provides four key areas for leaders to focus on when thinking about how they can support their team's wellbeing during this unprecedented time:

- 1 **Lead by example**
- 2 **Build trusting relationships**
- 3 **Help people take control**
- 4 **Have good conversations**

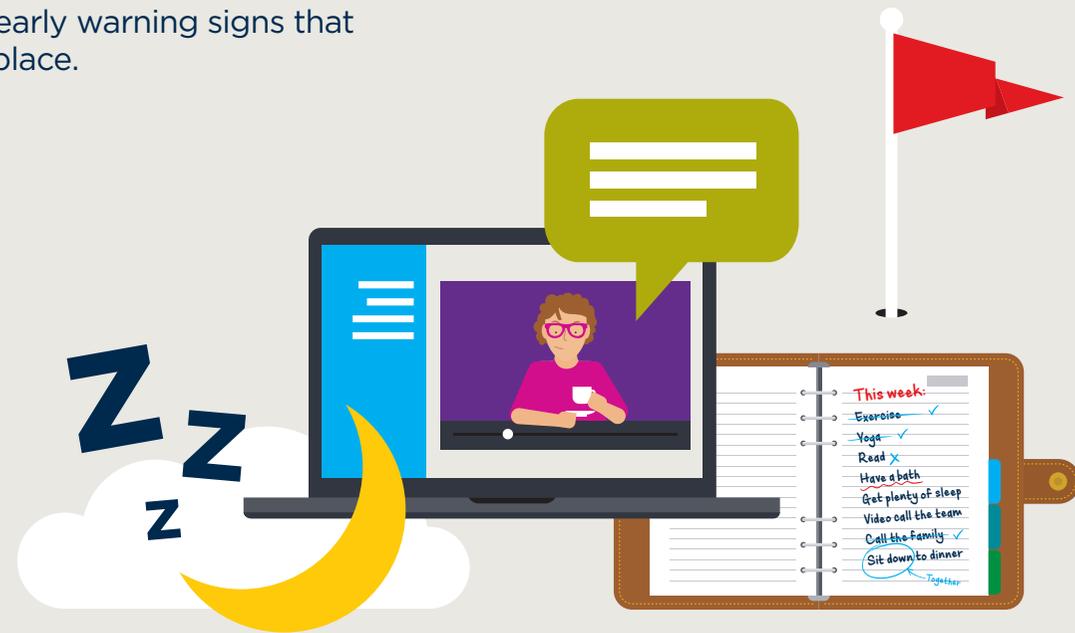
# Lead by example



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**One of the most important things you can do as a leader is to role-model taking care of your own overall wellbeing. Lead by example and be aware of how your behaviour can influence your team's behaviour. Share how you are managing your own energy. For example:**

- Talk about what strategies you use to maintain a positive mindset.
- Explain how you prioritise the activities that give you energy - your non negotiables, put them in your diary if relevant. This gives others the permission to do the same.
- Be vulnerable and share your red flags, the early warning signs that indicate you are drifting away from a good place.



## Build trusting relationships

Now more than ever it is important that you get to know your people as individuals so you can spot the early warning signs before they start to struggle and can have a helpful conversation.

### Here are some things to remember:

- Take time to consider the different circumstances people are working in and what impact they may have on them. For example:
 

They may be feeling very high levels of anxiety about coming to school each day, or feelings of guilt if there's a reason they need to stay at home. Reassure them that this is normal and make sure they have access to all the support that's available to them.
- There may be a risk of low mood or depression. Encourage them to take 20 mins for themselves every day to do something physical.
- Others may be living with and caring for elderly relatives. Encourage them to stay connected to friends and other family who they're comfortable expressing their feelings to.

The key thing is to be aware of people's circumstances and approach managing your team with a mindset of compassion. People may be feeling guilty that they are not able to do enough, or that they are letting people down. As a leader make sure you are setting realistic and clear expectations.



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Another important element of **building trusting relationships** is encouraging teams to be vulnerable and share red flags.

### Having self-awareness of your own red flags and building good antennae for recognising them in others is a key skill in managing yours and your teams' resilience. Top tips for seeing red flags remotely are:

- Encourage teams to share red flags with each other regularly. E.g. You could set up chats to allow people to share how they are feeling. You could ask each other where you are on the PE curve? And importantly, get people to share their strategies for how they maintain their energy levels.
- Check-in individually with those people who are struggling and with those who seem to be overly bright and cheery all the time. They may need more help than you realise.

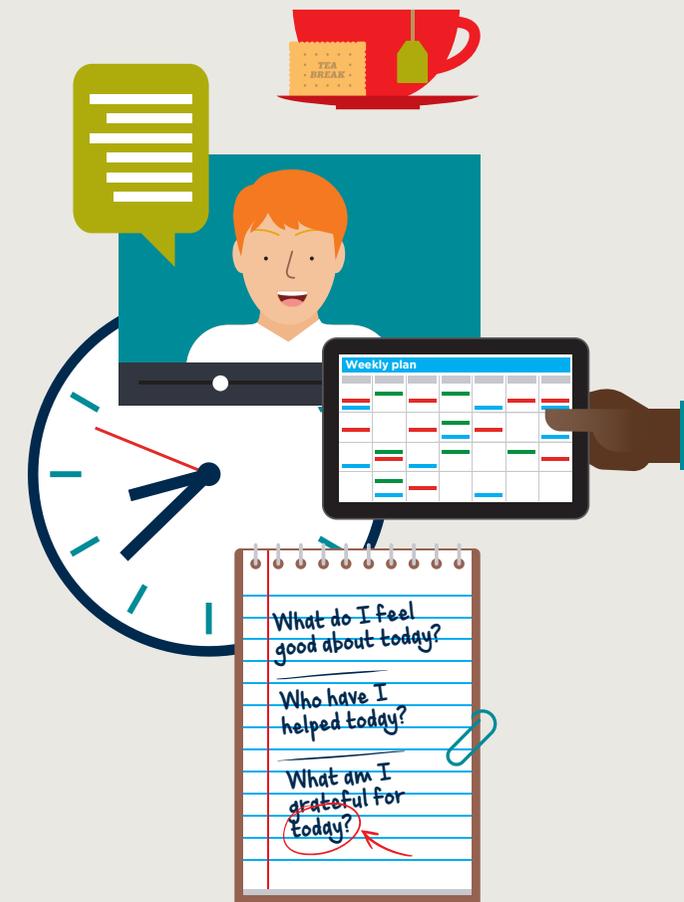
# Help people take control



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**Coach your team in using different levers of control and challenge people when you see them drifting to poor habits. Levers of control include prioritisation, delegation, planning, negotiation, focusing on tasks at hand. Some other tips for helping people take control are:**

- Encourage people to take things hour by hour. Especially if they are feeling overwhelmed by everything they need to do - staying on top of work and domestic responsibilities as well as staying socially connected.
- Help people see what they can take control of and what they can let go of. Talk to your team about what they can realistically do to successfully meet demands or solve any problems and then let go of concerns they can't control.
- Remind people they have a choice. Help them get to a mindset of 'I can choose how to make this new way of working, work for me'.
- Challenge people who are finding it hard to 'find the time' to look after themselves. Help them reflect on whether they have drifted into some bad habits that erode flexibility. Could they replace some bad habits with good choices that will improve their energy?
- Help people understand that it is better to spread out the things that keep you energised throughout the week and not just do them on your days off.
- Ensure that people feel they have 'permission' to be flexible - a conversation with you as their leader, can cut through any ambiguity.
- Encourage people to ask themselves three questions to close their working day: What do I feel good about today? Who have I helped today? What am I grateful for today?



## Have good conversations



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**Show people their wellbeing matters to you. Talk about it regularly in team meetings and in one to ones. Some ways of doing this are:**

- Set up ways of working which allow you to have brief exchanges to stay connected with your team/s. Allow time to talk about non-work things, just having a check-in can make a difference.
- Take time to recognise people and thank them for their work.
- Don't make assumptions about how people are feeling. People may change even from day to day. Some people will struggle but others may even thrive as they step up and take on new responsibilities.



**And finally. As a leader the best way that you can demonstrate to your team that everyone's wellbeing is important, is to manage your personal energy levels and role model the importance of selfcare.**

This guide was developed in partnership with Dr Bill Mitchell, the London based clinical psychologist designer of the PE programme, and author of "No time to breathe: navigating life and work for energy, success and happiness", published by Bloomsbury.