

Mindfulness

Could it change the way you teach?

Drawing on the traditions of Buddhist practice, the concept of mindfulness has become a global phenomenon – and it has particularly profound possibilities for education

When students become over-excited and noise levels begin to rise, how easy is it to get them to shut their eyes and focus on the moment, in silence, for five minutes? This might sound impossible, but teachers around the world are doing it, and reporting benefits for students and themselves.

Mindfulness has finally made a major breakthrough in education. The centuries-old Buddhist meditation technique has become a secular philosophy centred around focusing on what is happening moment-by-moment without being judgmental.

Teachers are adopting mindfulness strategies to improve students' concentration, self-awareness and empathy, and reduce stress and classroom conflict. Studies have shown that mindfulness can have positive effects on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and mental health disorders.

The mindfulness-in-education movement complements social emotional learning (SEL). Both teach children how to build self-awareness and empathy, and ways to effectively handle their emotions, enhancing academic success and providing essential life skills. The IB embraces SEL. It's reflected in the IB Learner Profile

attribute 'balanced', which encourages learners to understand the importance of calibrating all aspects of their lives to achieve wellbeing. The IB's Approaches to Teaching and Learning (ATL) element of 'emotional management' is included in the 'Affective skills' part of the guidelines, which focuses on managing state of mind.

Mindfulness encourages a growth mindset, and research shows that it creates better teachers. It helps them prioritize the demands of a working day, reducing stress and increasing resilience. But there is still skepticism. Parents have taken legal action against a school in the US as they were unhappy with the religious roots of mindfulness (see p15). And a lack of evidence demonstrating the long-term academic impact of mindfulness has raised concerns about the role it plays as an effective educational tool.

But it's a movement that can't be ignored. In this special feature, *IB World* looks at how schools are embracing mindfulness beyond Personal, Social Health Education (PSHE) classes, and how it is helping students deal with the stresses of a demanding curriculum.

Teacher health is important too. We've included wellbeing tips that can be tried right away by even the busiest of teachers.▶

“Take a deep breath and count to three...”

Students and teachers share how being in the present moment has enriched their lives

Eye pillows and lavender oil

■ Nanjing International School, China

“To me, mindfulness is when you relax without falling asleep and without thinking about yourself,” says Middle Years Programme (MYP) student Nohemi from Nanjing International School, China. “I find it relaxing and your mind kind of opens up,” adds classmate Freja.

Neila Steele, a Primary Years Programme (PYP) grade 5 ELL (English Language Learner) teacher and certified yoga instructor, practices mindfulness with students and offers yoga. Her ‘balloon breath’ exercises help get PYP students settled during transition time.

“As a teacher, mindfulness is about bringing awareness to the present, where you stop multitasking and instead focus on the moment,” she says.

Steele also practices mindful eating, mindful walking and mindful ‘body scans’ with older students. As students lie on the floor with their eyes closed, they have the option to use eye pillows and put lavender oil on their temples. “They love it,” she says. “At first they didn’t realize we were practicing mindfulness until we started using the language – that we’re living in the moment and letting our thoughts float away.”

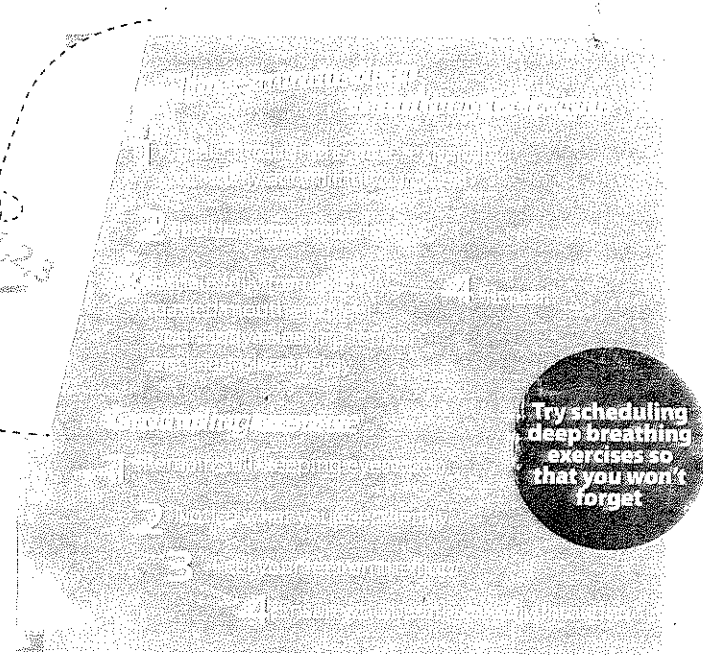
Students are also encouraged to reflect on negative emotions by naming their ‘monster’. “They connect to their sensations and emotions, identifying thoughts that are unkind to themselves and others,” says Steele.

Due to its popularity, during the recent MYP exams, 60 students signed up for a mindfulness session. They have also been using their strategies at home. “Mindfulness helps them to be more creative,” says Steele.

She encourages fellow teachers to try mindfulness and realize the multitude of benefits for themselves.



Eye pillows and mindfulness help promote relaxation



Try scheduling deep breathing exercises so that you won't forget

Maintain health and handle stress

■ International School of Paris, France

“Mindfulness helped to distract me from trying to remember stuff for the exams, which was probably stressing me out more than the actual exam!” said one student at the International School of Paris (ISP). “It helped me relax and forget all the stress and imagine that I was the only one in the room,” said another. “It helped me to calm down and focus my thoughts.”

ISP uses a range of mindfulness techniques, integrating them into the curriculum and classroom teaching. Students are taught breathing techniques and have been offered yoga to help maintain health and handle stress. At the start of MYP internal exams, students were read a two-minute ‘relaxation script’ to help focus and calm them. Now, 98 per cent of students surveyed have requested that it be used in the IB Diploma Programme (DP) exams.

DP students set up a ‘Balance’ club as part of a Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) project and it provided support for the IB Learner Profile attribute, which can be difficult to maintain during the DP years. “Students invited local specialists in different health professions to share ideas about how to maintain balance in their emotional, physical and academic lives,” says Tim Logan, ISP Vice Principal for Student Wellbeing.

A wellbeing team (consisting of homeroom teachers, mentors, a counselor, nurse, and heads of grade) supports students by teaching the skills needed to emotionally and academically regulate themselves.

Mindfulness has enriched teachers’ experience in the classroom, too. “It’s reinvigorated their development of new techniques and enhanced learning,” adds Logan.

Mindfulness increases...

- ↑ Attention and focus
- ↑ Confidence and willingness to take risks with learning
- ↑ Self-awareness and a feeling of empathy towards others
- ↑ Connection to others

Mindfulness reduces...

- ↓ Stress
- ↓ Anxiety
- ↓ Disengagement, distraction and disruption
- ↓ Anger

Quiet time outdoors

High Meadows School, Georgia, US

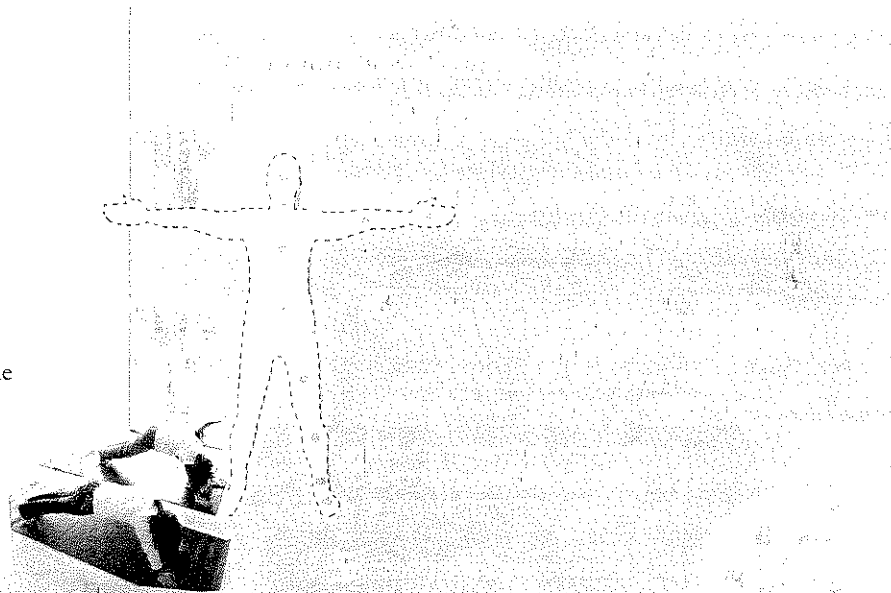
“Mindfulness in the classroom is encouraging students to recognize how they’re feeling in the present moment, be aware of what’s happening around them and share their main goal for the day,” says PYP Coordinator Kathryn McElvaney from High Meadows School, Georgia, US. “We often get ourselves wrapped up in the past or worried about the future, so we talk about staying in the present moment.”

To promote mindfulness, students take their classrooms outside. “Teachers will incorporate the outdoors in some aspect of learning every day. Quiet time in the fresh air is a good way to bring you back to the present moment and minimize stress,” adds McElvaney.

Students work with school counselor Sue Amacker to recognize the ‘power of the breath’, which means conscious breathing. Mentors help students explore their feelings when they are stressed, and they are offered meditation.

Amacker says: “Mindfulness is critical to social emotional learning. It calms us when we are angry, sad or frustrated. Being mindful helps our youngest students process difficult emotions they aren’t familiar with, and it allows our older students to more fully experience the joy in life.”

But mindfulness is not just for the students at High Meadows; teachers are offered yoga sessions every week. “It’s a great way for them to slow down. When we are looking after our own wellbeing, we are doing well for our students. We need to model that wellness back to them.”



Students at High Meadows School practice yoga

Awareness of attention triggers

International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHMCAA), Vietnam

“For me, mindfulness is about trying to make students aware of their own attention triggers,” says science teacher Jozef Bendik, who has taken what he learned as a DP teacher and now applies it at International School Ho Chi Minh City American Academy (ISHMCAA). “Students reflect on why they might become disengaged and less interested in certain scientific topics by writing reflections in their journals.”

Students at ISHMC-AA used to frequently

memorize and recite facts for quizzes and tests. But Bendik has changed this with mindfulness techniques. “I help them realize that thinking precedes understanding. They have to think about what they are learning and how that will help their understanding,” he says.

Student Lisa Nguyen says: “I can learn about what I’m best at, control myself and avoid stress.”

It was a challenge at first. Students didn’t understand what Bendik was trying to do. They found it difficult to distinguish the differences between thinking, understanding and memorizing, but the results have been invaluable.

“It was a whole new skill for them,” he says. “Now, they find that learning is more effective and they are more confident in their learning. Students are self-motivated and their learning has become faster and more effective.”

Positive education and gratitude

French International School Hong Kong

DP Assistant Examiner and language teacher at French International School Hong Kong, Nathalie Grobe, practices mindfulness for 20 minutes every day, with the help of an app called Headspace. It’s allowed her to be more present and calm, listen more, talk less, and be more open. “Now, I don’t let things build up,” she says. “I use my breaks wisely by doing breathing exercises.”

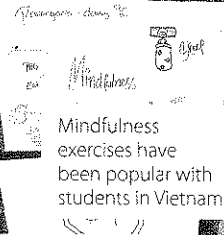
Grobe is studying mindfulness with Mindful Schools and has brought her new-found skills into the classroom: “I recently gave my first mindfulness session to my year 11 class. It went really well. Soon, I will offer lunchtime sessions with the help of meditation apps.”

She is also currently completing continuing professional development (CPD) with the English School Foundation on positive education, which is a shift away from focusing on academic achievement and instead increases motivation and promotes wellbeing.

“I’ve visited a few schools, looking at the teaching of ‘character strengths’ and ‘character education’, which is linked to emotional learning,” says Grobe.

“Mindfulness through positive education teaches students compassion, gratitude and kindness. We are encouraged to write gratitude letters to ourselves, and this helps us focus on the moment and be thankful for what we have.”

“Practicing mindfulness helps students improve their time management skills as they can focus better,” adds Grobe. “It also helps students recognize and process any difficult emotions they may experience.”



Balloon breaths

- 1 Sit down with legs crossed.
- 2 Place hands on belly and imagine a balloon inside.
- 3 Inhale, which inflates the belly (balloon).
- 4 Exhale to deflate the balloon.

(It's a good idea to use a balloon as a visual aid)

Is it just a fad?

Mindfulness has been praised for its ability to increase student wellbeing, but its impact on learning has been questioned by critics. **Sophie-Marie Odum** investigates

Mindfulness has enjoyed a recent boom in mainstream education, but while the immediate benefits seem attractive, there is a concern that it's becoming too popular, too quickly. As a result, it has been called a 'fad', and its shortcomings highlighted by some scientists and educators.

What the critics say

Mindfulness may help students to become more aware of their immediate surroundings, but can it increase resilience? According to a headteacher in the UK, there is a place for mindfulness, but it falls short when helping children to cope with the pressures of the real world.

David Lambon, Head of Ampleforth College in the UK, says: "We need to give children not just coping strategies, but values that they can rely on, no matter what life throws at them. We need to give them something that forms their character."

He suggests serving the community in more direct ways, such as the IB's CAS component of the DP, is a more effective way to help students cope with stress. It helps them change their perspective on the world, and can improve their capacity for empathy, he says.

Oxford academic and author Theodore Zeldin agrees. He thinks mindfulness is "bad for people", and that the world needs to move away from an era of self-discovery.

Zeldin believes people are wasting valuable thinking-time on meditation and mindfulness, and should stop trying to "clear their heads". He instead encourages individuals to make new relationships with those who share different views.

While many studies demonstrate that mindfulness improves concentration, research has also found that it can have a negative effect on memory, making it less accurate. Three separate experiments conducted by the University of California, San Diego, US, found that imaginary experiences were perceived as real after mindfulness training.

Religious roots

Since the 1960s, the United States Supreme Court has found it unconstitutional for public schools to teach religious practices. Although mindfulness originally stems from Buddhism, it has since also become a secular practice.

Many schools avoid using the terms

'meditation' and 'chanting' as they suggest religious overtones.

Mindfulness promotes a caring attitude as students are encouraged to send good thoughts to others, while yoga is hailed for its ability to teach breathing exercises and reduce stress. But some parents still feel uncomfortable with mindfulness's roots in Eastern religion and say it's a waste of class time.

In 2013, parents sued California's Encinitas Union school district. At the time, it was



Many schools teach yoga both as exercise and with mindfulness

Gregory Bull/AP Press Association

believed to be the first district in the country to have full-time yoga teachers at every one of its schools. Concerned parents felt the classes were "inherently religious" and violated the constitutional principle of separating church and state.

Administrators argued yoga is a secular way to promote strength, flexibility and balance. Prosecutors were overruled, as the judge agreed. Parents are still fighting the verdict, causing concern in some quarters, and showing that schools need to be aware of how mindfulness is taught.

Conflict of interest

There's a thin line to tread when it comes to teaching mindfulness in the classroom.

Mindfulness teaches students to live in the present moment but encouraging forward planning helps students effectively manage their time. This discrepancy could cause confusion.

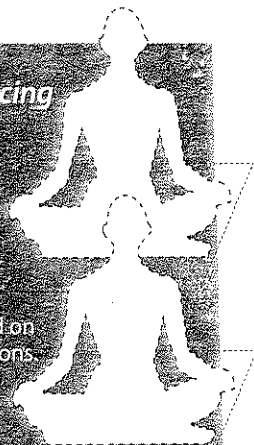
Once teachers have overcome this hurdle, continuity may also be an issue. When students leave one classroom in a calm and mindful state, this could be instantly disrupted in their next class if that teacher does not practice mindfulness. Ensuring the principles are applied at home is also a challenge.

Teaching mindfulness is harder than it looks and teachers require proper training to practice it with students. There's more to it than asking students to 'breathe deeply for three minutes'. By not practicing it themselves, there is a risk that teachers will have a different mindset to their students or students could be put off, warn experts. There are certain caveats, too. Studies suggest that mindfulness is not for those who are currently depressed. It tends to uncover hidden emotions, so teachers need to be trained and prepared to support students.

There may be plenty of research that make the benefits of mindfulness seem very attractive, but many realize that it's not a quick-fix solution. Teaching this technique requires commitment, and schools may want to approach it with caution.

What to consider before introducing mindfulness to your students

- 1 Practice mindfulness yourself and find out what the benefits are. Teaching students to be present starts with you.
- 2 Ensure you explain to students what mindfulness isn't, such as chanting, mysticism and just sitting cross-legged on a mat. This will help manage expectations.
- 3 Beware not to force it on students—certain techniques, like meditation, don't suit everyone.
- 4 Be mindful of the terminology used—'chanting' may imply religious affiliation. Instead, promote mindfulness as part of a healthy lifestyle.
- 5 Last, but not least, make sure it's fun.



Investigating stress in the DP

The IB's Chief Academic Officer **David Hawley** reveals the organization's plans to combat stress within the DP



Tell us more about the IB Workload and Stress survey currently underway

This is the first year of a two-year study. We've asked questions related to

wellness at the beginning of the DP and then again towards the end of the first year. We've found that most measures of self-reported wellbeing decreased from the beginning to the end of the school year. Some students are experiencing a tremendous amount of stress, but we don't think it's unique to the IB.

When I visit schools and talk to students, I find that students who don't report that the IB is stressful manage their time particularly well.

For students who are struggling, what will the IB do to address this?

First of all, we want to get some good baseline data. We are auditing student workload to ensure it is reasonable and will make adjustments based on what we discover. We are also driving towards more of an interdisciplinary approach, focusing on big ideas and essential concepts and less on adding more content to our courses. We will explore how to design a single assessment that would measure what has been learned in more than one subject.

Finally, we want to alert schools about all the developments related to social and emotional learning (SEL) and find ways to provide teacher resources in this area, including what is working in approaches to mindfulness, attention and time management. An explicit requirement or expectation for students to dedicate time to physical fitness is not a formal part of the DP, but perhaps it should be.

Does the IB put more emphasis on academic achievement than on SEL?

One of the fundamental aspects of the IB is the IB Learner Profile, and the attribute 'balanced' encourages students to achieve this in all areas of their lives.

The experience of the IB is strongly

influenced by what we measure. We've looked at a student journey through the DP and how many of the attributes we are assessing. We discovered that we assess the cognitive attributes well – ie inquirer, knowledgeable, thinker, communicators and reflection. But we don't give enough attention to the social, emotional, wellbeing and health aspects, such as caring, open-minded, balanced.

How does the IB promote wellness?

Approaches to Teaching and Learning (ATL) is common to all IB programmes and every student experience. Last year, we published a microsite about ATL, providing more information, and highlighted self-management skills and resilience.

In a recent conversation with David Perkins, author of *Life in the Mindful Classroom: Nurturing the Disposition of Mindfulness*, I asked him how teachers can develop empathic, ethical young people. He explained that such dispositions are best absorbed directly from the school environment, from the culture that educators create and model. If adults are frenzied and stressed, the students will be too. And, of course, the opposite will be true.

How have parents responded to the pressures of the DP on their children?

Some parents emphasize the instrumental value of the IB, say, as a passport to a good university instead of its more intrinsic value as education for life. Sometimes parents themselves are the drivers of some of the stress students experience.

How will the IB develop best practice in terms of teaching wellness?

We are working with a number of different partners who are doing important work in this area. For example, we have partnered with Peter Senge and Daniel Goleman to find ways to apply principles from their book, *The Triple Focus: A New Approach to Education*, which looks at the inner, outer and other person. We are exploring questions like: Can empathy be taught? We are on a journey of co-creation in partnership with educators to do this important work.

BREAKING THE TABOO

Psychologist and co-author of *Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools*, **Katherine Weare** (pictured below) speaks candidly about how schools can address mental health issues



Saying "I'm stressed" is socially acceptable nowadays. But be aware that such a statement could be disguising deeper issues, such as anxiety and depression, either in students or staff.

Overwhelming stress is not conducive to effective learning in students or good teaching in staff. Our brains go into fight, flight or freeze mode.

Positively teaching the skills that underpin good mental health and wellbeing – such as self-awareness, emotional control, resilience, and empathy – is vital. School staff have a clear role in both modeling these skills and developing them in their students.

Being a young person can be hard in today's world. Schools really need to clue up and help children navigate what can be the dark side of social media, such as cyberbullying and the normalization of eating disorders, self-harm and suicide.

We don't want to turn every teenage drama into a mental health issue, but we don't want to dismiss issues either. Teachers are good at spotting when a young person is behaving differently – they may either act out in anger or violence, or become more quiet and withdrawn.

Good teachers can recognize that 'difficult' behaviour needs addressing and has an underlying meaning. It can be an opportunity to help, get to know a student better and find positive ways forward.

The most basic need is for staff to have a friendly, kind and respectful relationship with students so that they feel they can approach an adult if they need to talk. It can be a life saver.

Self-harm, for example, is something many teachers find frightening, but is sadly increasingly being used as an outlet for difficult feelings in students and even staff.

If you spot signs, such as someone who is suddenly particularly keen to cover up, gently take them aside and give them an opportunity to tell you if anything is worrying them.

It's important to remain calm if they do open up. Matter-of-factly help them get any dressings they may need and encourage them to keep talking.

Making sure you and the whole team are well informed about mental health issues will give you the confidence to handle challenging and upsetting situations should they arise.

Keep calm and carry on

Students reflect on the DP and share how they maintain an air of tranquility during stressful moments

Regina Labardini Muench
DP student (pictured right),
Monterrey Institute of Technology
and Higher Education, Mexico



"I'm a teenager so there is always something to stress about – friends, boys, school... the list goes on. The DP is very demanding but music, exercise and scented candles help me stay calm.

"Being a risk-taker and open-minded encourages me to look for different ways to release stress. Sometimes I'll play my guitar and sing. This helps me refresh my mind and then I feel ready to continue with my studies. It's important to find time for my friends, too.

"Time management is key to the DP. It's about organization and being able to handle many things at once, so I set myself a strict schedule.

"In the past, I've become stressed by leaving things to the last minute. If I feel overwhelmed, I stop and recognize I'm stressed and tell myself not to rush or burn out. I sit down, take a deep breath and relax a little, and then continue.

"Creating a balance can be hard to maintain, but it's not impossible. A balanced lifestyle includes physical, emotional, and intellectual wellbeing. Having a healthy body, and being emotionally stable makes it much easier to do better academically."

Krishna Venigalla
DP student, Downingtown
STEM Academy
High School, US



"I had become so used to hearing the word 'stress' in my school that I decided to change my perspective of it. I would rather indulge in solutions, than problems.

"The hardest week was when I had to complete various summatives, revise for my SATs, create an agenda for an upcoming school club meeting, complete an internship application, be a good friend in a time of need, as well as be a responsible daughter and sister at home. I thought, "how am I supposed to do this all?" On top of it all, I was unwell.

"I soon realized there was much more to be happy about. This helped me to draw a line between what I wanted to do and what would look good on an application form.

"The key to a peaceful environment is positive energy, and mindful actions, words and attitudes.

"I started learning about yoga and understanding the importance of wellness. It helped me. Now, my friend Diana and I are planning our first wellness day. We'll help people explore the potential of yoga and how they can handle stress through mindfulness."

Rachel Bellman
IB alumna, who now works
with Lanterna Education,
which offers study skills
sessions to current IB students



"I remember the DP felt like a lot of work. But I was lucky in that my school offered a lot of support. Ultimately, I found that the only way to manage stress was to deal with the problems head-on; for me this meant admitting to myself that I needed to put extra time and effort into the subjects. I wasn't as strong in.

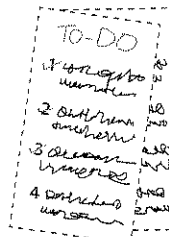
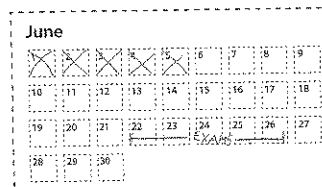
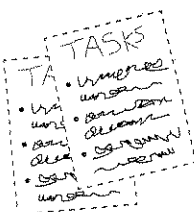
"I identified the specific topics that I didn't understand and then asked questions about them until I understood. This was the only way to truly stop myself from getting stressed out about what I didn't know.

"I feel I was successful at not getting too overwhelmed. It helped that I really loved my other subject choices, and I also made sure that I kept on seeing my friends and doing other extra-curricular activities.

"Learning to give yourself a break when you need it can be one of the hardest but most important things to remember when dealing with stress. Doing things I enjoyed that had nothing to do with work and spending time with friends not only helped with the stress, but also made the workload feel more manageable."

Stress-reduction tips to share with students

1 Approach workloads in a rational way
Write down all your tasks. "This can help to identify the problem and work out a solution. Recognizing what exactly is causing stress doesn't always come naturally," says IB alumna Rachel Bellman.



2 Rest
Sleep is still important, even if it is the night before an exam. Lack of sleep affects our mood and if prolonged, has negative effects on wellbeing. Maintaining a healthy diet is important too. Skipping meals affects memory and concentration.



3 Commit to a plan
"To-do lists, schedules and visual calendars can help. This level of planning doesn't always come instinctively to students, but can really help to minimize stress in the long term," advises Bellman.

4 Pause
Stopping and breathing deeply can help shift the mind from a stressful situation.



7 steps to improve teacher wellbeing

You might be great at caring for others, but what about looking after yourself?

1 Mindfulness begins at home

Mindfulness can help teachers manage the demands of teaching. "When I practiced mindfulness regularly, I was calmer, felt less flustered by student behaviour and took disruptive behaviour less personally. As I was more effective at managing behaviour, my classroom was calmer, and students were more engaged and learned better," says Professor Patricia Jennings, psychologist and author of *Mindfulness for Teachers: Simple Skills for Peace and Productivity in the Classroom*.

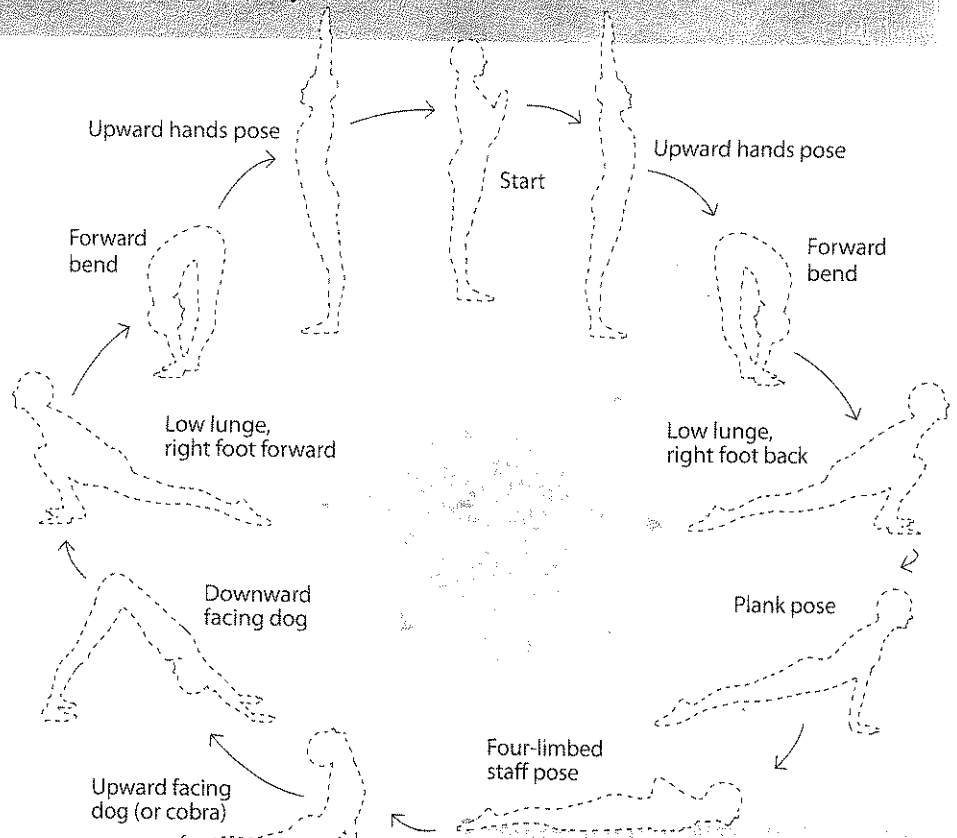
Mindful activities include walking, eating and meditation. Try going for a walk and paying attention to your surroundings. The main goal for all these activities is to bring your mind to the present moment and not stress about the future.

2 Go off-script

In Jennings' book, she discusses scripts: "A database of stored emotional memories that influence the way we think, feel and behave. Scripts are shortcuts; they enable us to react to a situation quickly and without thought," she writes.

Jennings says that many scripts are formed during our childhood, as this is mostly when we learn what is deemed 'appropriate' behaviour.

But scripts can cause problems. When we project a past problem on to a present situation, this causes worry, anxiety and stress. For example, you may assume that a student's bad behaviour is intentional when it's more likely the result of something going



Becoming mindful of 'scripts' can combat negative emotions

on outside of school.

Being mindfully aware can help you recognize and disengage from scripts when they arise, reducing negative emotion.

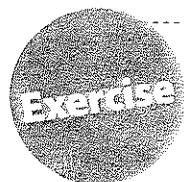
3 Take care of yourself

"Teachers need to take care of themselves by getting enough sleep, exercise and rest, and by doing activities they find fun," says Jennings.

Consider yoga. It boosts physical and mental wellbeing and can improve sleep, and concentration. You learn how to clear the mind through breathing and yoga poses (try the sun salutation, above), which are designed to reduce the effects of stress on the body.

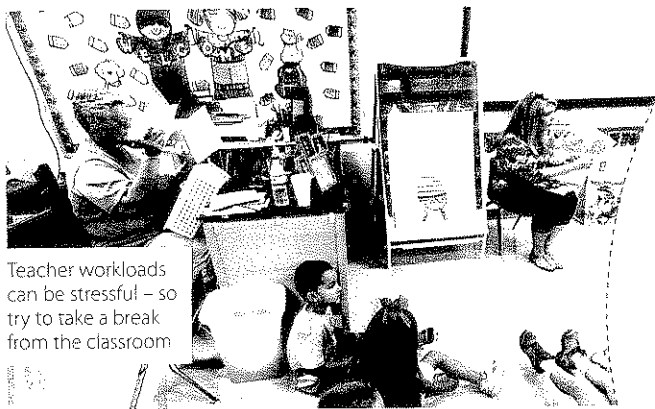
And if you don't have time to work out or go for a walk, conscious breathing counts as an exercise: "Three mindful breaths can calm the nervous system and help teachers get back on track if they are starting to notice themselves getting stressed, anxious or frustrated," says Jennings.

See page 12 for this exercise.



How to change negative thinking

- 1 Find a quiet space →
- 2 Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths until you feel relaxed →
- 3 Reflect on a problem that is currently worrying you →
- 4 Imagine a positive outcome for about one minute →
- 5 Stop and notice how this feels in the body



Teacher workloads can be stressful – so try to take a break from the classroom

4 Take a break

Know when to stop. The greatest pressure comes from ourselves. Making time for family and hobbies contributes to happiness. And, if the workload is too much, don't be afraid to delegate, where possible.

Exercise

Recognizing emotions

This can be done five minutes before a class

- 1 Find a quiet space where you won't be disturbed
- ↓
- 2 Close your eyes and breathe deeply
- ↓
- 3 Notice how you feel
- ↓
- 4 Name the emotion
- ↓
- 5 Ask yourself what prompted it and investigate the emotion by asking: "How am I feeling physically?", "How intense is this emotion?"
- ↓
- 6 To release the emotion, exhale deeply and imagine the emotion leaving your body.

5 Monitor your emotions

Stress manifests itself in physical ways. How do you know when you're overwhelmed, stressed or anxious? Signals may include tense shoulders, jaws and an increase in body temperature. These telltale signs may be accompanied by irritability, lack of sleep and loss of appetite. "When teachers start noticing these things, I encourage them to calm themselves by taking three deep

"When teachers start noticing signs of stress, I encourage them to calm themselves by taking three deep breaths"

breaths, or to do a grounding exercise," says Jennings (see page 12 for this exercise).

Recognizing your triggers will help you choose how you react to a potentially stressful or challenging situation in the future.

Brain dump

- 1 Draw a circle and inside, write 'control'
- ↓
- 2 Draw another around it and write 'influence' in the second ring
- ↓
- 3 Draw a third circle around the other two and name this 'no control'
- ↓
- 4 Write the things you can control in the centre, things you can influence in the next ring and things over which you have no control in the outer ring. This will help you plan what you can influence and think of solutions and ways forward, while helping you realize what you cannot control.

Exercise

6 Start a 'feel-good' jar

Every time you receive a compliment from friends, family, students and parents, write it down and put it in a jar. You can draw on this positive encouragement whenever you feel it's all getting a bit too much.



7 Ask for help

Finally, if you feel you've tried everything, but still feel stressed, ask for help. Whether that's from a colleague, manager or a doctor. Stress doesn't have to be part of everyday life. High levels over long periods of time can be seriously bad for health.

