



Supporting Staff and Creating a Mentally Healthy Workplace

ALCHEMY

Health and Wellness

Teaching is regarded as one of the most stressful professions in Australia



The Effects of Teacher Burnout

Chronic stress (stress experienced regularly over time) ultimately leads to [teacher burnout](#) and mental health conditions like anxiety and depression.

A study based on Australian school teachers reported that teachers are more depressed and anxious than the average Australian. With more than half suffering from anxiety and nearly one-fifth feeling depressed. Teacher burnout is a growing problem across schools worldwide as teachers struggle to manage their workload and growing expectations amongst staff shortages, pandemic-related anxieties, lack of opportunities to connect with their peers, and the ever-growing list of implications resulting from the COVID-19 in our schools.

Burnout can cause a slew of [physical and mental symptoms](#) that impact staff's ability to bring their best selves to work, take on new ideas and participate in any change strategies.

When teachers are stressed and on edge, they have less patience in the classroom, they're less able to access their compassion and empathy, and they won't be as in tune with their student's needs. This can be a recipe for disaster, especially when managing students and classrooms.

Additionally, when any of our staff feel burnt out they're more likely to have a negative perception of their workplace, which lowers their job satisfaction and may encourage them to seek work elsewhere.



7 Ways to Create a Mentally Healthy Workplace

01

IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS OF MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

- Understand yourself, your wellbeing, and your mental health as a leader
- Provide and engage in professional learning opportunities which outline signs and symptoms of mental health conditions
- Learn to recognise the signs of stress and burnout in our staff
- Reduce the stigma associated with mental health

RECOGNISE THE STRESSORS

02

- What factors might be impacting staff wellbeing and mental health?
- Complete a school scan, conduct a staff survey, and have discussions to find out what the common stressors are
- Recognise when staff members might be “at risk.”

03

TALK ABOUT THE STRESS, PROMOTE AND NORMALISE MENTAL HEALTH

- Talk openly to staff about stress, burnout, or anxiety and reassure staff that their privacy will be respected.
- Respect any staff’s decision not to speak about their mental health, but leave the door open for further discussion.
- Pay attention to employees who are behaving or talking in ways that are unusual for them.
- Use meeting times to reiterate the importance of staff wellbeing and follow through with actions that match.

HAVE A STOP REFLECT ACT CONVERSATION

04

- **STOP:** Make time to ask the person how they are going. Pause and listen.
- **REFLECT:** Remember it is not your job to offer a diagnosis or counseling. Providing emotional support is about being willing to talk about what is going on, how the person/group feels, and their options for support.
- **ACT:** There are many ways to act, including, acknowledging feelings and experiences, offering practical support within your professional boundaries. Ask if there is anything you can help with, encouraging self-care

7 Ways to Create a Mentally Healthy Workplace

05

RESPOND TO REDUCE THE STRESS

- Develop leader capability in positive, proactive leadership
- Review school scan or survey results and consider ways to adjust leadership initiatives or school directions to respond to staff needs
- Offer emotional support to those who disclose personal information or are “at risk.”
- Develop a whole-school wellbeing action plan to respond to key areas that staff report as the top stressors
- Develop a personalised wellbeing action plan for any staff members who have disclosed concerns about their mental health
- Provide clarity on the staff member’s role, responsibilities, and any reasonable adjustments made in the workplace to support their recovery
- Seek support from any human resources specialists, occupational rehabilitation providers, or Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) that might be available

06

UP-SKILL STAFF ON WAYS TO LOOK AFTER ONE ANOTHER

- Provide staff with information about mental health and wellbeing services and support networks,
- Build employees’ skills and confidence to approach someone they may be concerned about.
- Promote free resources to help your employees have a conversation if they’re worried about a colleague.
- Establish a peer support or mentoring program for staff.
- Offer team-building activities to support group dynamics and productivity

07

INCREASE AWARENESS OF YOUR SCHOOL’S COMMITMENT TO CREATING A MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACE

- Share your staff wellbeing action plan with staff and seek their input. Continue to promote your progress, both internally and externally, and seek consultation from staff.
- Provide information to all employees on their specific roles and responsibilities relating to mental health.