



## KEEPING YOUR SANITY: 6 STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE WELL-BEING

By Angelica Ribeiro and Kent Divoll

**B**eing a teacher is rewarding, but it can also be stressful, which can negatively affect your emotional and professional well-being. This can impact your performance in the classroom and lead some teachers to leave the profession (McCarthy et al., 2015). It is crucial, therefore, that teachers focus on their own well-being to manage stress.

Below are six strategies for teachers to improve their well-being:

- 1. Make time for social connections.** Connecting with others can reduce teacher anxiety, positively impact their work performance, and improve their concentration, well-being, and optimism (Achor, 2018). Make time to be with others and build relationships, even if it's through brief calls or text messages.
- 2. Focus on what is in your control.** When teachers feel stressed, they must focus on

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what they can control. Doing so activates the prefrontal cortex (responsible for decision-making and planning) and decreases the activation of the amygdala (linked to feelings of stress; Suzuki, 2015). Teachers more successfully manage stress when they focus on concrete actions they can take. Next time you feel stressed, make a list of things that are in your control and just take steps to improve or act on them.

- 3. Meditate.** Meditation promotes positive emotions, alleviates stress, calms the mind, and helps teachers redirect their attention (Suzuki, 2015). You experience the benefits of meditation after a few minutes, so a session doesn't have to last long. Meditate at least 5 to 10 minutes every day to experience the benefits. You can find YouTube videos and apps, such as Calm ([www.youtube.com/user/calmdotcom](http://www.youtube.com/user/calmdotcom)), to help you with meditation.
- 4. Practice gratitude.** Among other benefits, expressing gratitude helps teachers create a positive mindset by training their minds to search for good things (Ribeiro, 2018). Having a positive mindset can help teachers reduce stress because they can more easily see positive realities and find solutions to problems (Dweck, 2016). Take a moment to think about your last 24 hours and then write three things you appreciated during the day.
- 5. Be a benefit-finder.** Negative emotions and feelings are part of teaching. One way you can deal with them is by accepting your feelings, looking for the good in difficult events, and reminding yourself that challenging situations can help you grow (Ben-Shahar, 2012). Being a benefit-finder helps teachers experience situations in a more positive way, which reduces their negative feelings.
- 6. Focus on increasing happiness.** Reflecting about your day and taking steps to increase your overall happiness can help you manage stress and improve your well-being. In addition to the books listed in the sidebar, personal journals are tools to improve your happiness. *My Happiness Habit Journal* is a comprehensive journal that provides teachers with a systematic, metacognitive approach to setting happiness goals, creating happiness

habits, and focusing on the positive. Make time to reflect upon your happiness to better deal with stress and improve your emotional well-being.

You can be more effective as a teacher when you understand how to take care of yourself emotionally, manage stress, and be happier. You will be better able to cope with the demands of teaching and life. As Jensen (2008) suggests, "Only when you are effectively managing your own stress can you be at your best for others" (p. 48).

### References

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- Dweck, C. (2016). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House.
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- Ribeiro, A. (2018). *Running into happiness: How my happiness habit journal created lasting happiness in the midst of a crazy-busy semester*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Suzuki, W. (2015). *Healthy brain, happy life: A personal program to activate your brain and do everything better*. Harper Collins.

### Book Recommendations

- *Before Happiness: The 5 Hidden Keys to Achieving Success, Spreading Happiness, and Sustaining Positive Change*, by Shawn Achor
- *Choose the Life You Want: The Mindful Way to Happiness*, by Tal Ben-Shahar
- *My Happiness Habit Journal*, by Angelica Ribeiro
- *Running Into Happiness: How My Happiness Habit Journal Created Lasting Happiness in the Midst of a Crazy-Busy Semester*, by Angelica Ribeiro
- *The Myths of Happiness: What Should Make You Happy, but Doesn't, What Shouldn't Make You Happy, but Does*, by Sonja Lyubomirsky



Keep an eye on KDP's Webinar Calendar [kdp.org/events/webinarcalendar.php](http://kdp.org/events/webinarcalendar.php) and check out the recordings for a presentation from Angelica Ribeiro and Kent Divoll.



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