

## **The Spice of Life – Looking After Staff Well-being First is OK**

(This is a draft of an article that was since edited and published)

It's too easy for teachers to become so busy with the demands of their families, targets, paperwork, curricula and responsible jobs that looking after themselves can become a luxury item. Deep down though we owe it to the children in our care to push the guilt aside from time to time to ensure our own energy levels are topped up and that we are feeling very positive! It's humbling to remember that energy levels, stress, self-esteem and self-confidence are inextricably linked with our ability to enjoy life and be positive, creative and efficient – qualities so crucial for working young people!

### **What can schools do?**

In the Quality Circle Time (QCT) model schools engage in encouraging staff to negotiate a work-life balance. Schools use INSET days, staff meetings and staff circle times for considering the emotional well-being of staff. The checklist below contains some useful starting points for discussion.

#### Looking after the self-esteem and morale of the staff in your school

- Are there timetabled staff meetings to focus on troubled children where staff can ask for support?
- Is there a golden notice board in the staff room for positive feedback and "thank yous"?
- Is the staff room a visually attractive place to unwind?
- Do staff find reasons to celebrate – birthdays, Fridays, end of term?
- Is there space available in the staff room for staff Circle Time meetings?
- Are there termly staff meetings to focusing upon 'lifting of spirits'? i.e. where all staff devise ways of keeping morale high?
- Have staff got together for work/life balance meetings and agreed measures to make their lives easier?
- Are staff facilities as aesthetic as possible – has the toilet had a make-over, there are fresh flowers, music playing or pictures? In the kitchen there might be a dishwasher, coffee percolator and toaster.

### **What can individuals do to keep spirits high and boost self-esteem?**

#### 1. Golden Moments

The QCT model recommends taking regular 'Golden Moments'. A Golden Moment is taking a few minutes out to sit outside, gaze at the stars, cogitate over a cappuccino, do a yoga stretch or a mini mind relaxation – whatever acts as a mini-escape to recharge and re-balance.

#### 2. Visiting the Wells – for the SPICE of life!

Life in school can be draining and all-consuming - like all your 'wells' of energy and resources being emptied. The QCT model encourages adults to metaphorically 'visit their wells' providing energy, balance and perspective. The 5 wells spell out 'SPICE' – spiritual, physical, intellectual, creative and emotional. Remember to visit each of the following wells as often as you can:

- Spiritual Well

Renewing a sense of wonder and awe through spiritual belief, meditation, nature or any way to still the mind for experiencing energy, beauty, grace.

- Physical Well

It is hard to be emotionally healthy if you feel physically unfit, tense and lethargic. We all need exercise, relaxation, to eat well, keep hydrated and a good night's sleep!

- Intellectual Well

Reading books, watching plays and films, debating, suggesting ideas, planning, structuring and thinking things through. The mind shrinks if not engaged with ideas outside of work!

- Creative Well

Enjoy your senses and imagination. Appreciate the arts and write, draw, sing, garden, sew, cook or dance. Play with colour, texture, sound, scent and movement.

- Emotional Well

Spend time with others, friendships, loving relationships with partners, family. Opportunities to express feelings, talk through dilemmas and, importantly, we all need some FUN!

### 3. Having Golden Rules for Ourselves

Many schools have Golden Rules for pupils, but boundaries for ourselves can help too. Here are ours but you can tweak these to suit you! Ideal for pinning to the inside of your cupboard door!

#### *Ten Golden Rules for Myself*

- I should give myself the same care and attention as I give others.
- I am not an endless resource for others, I must stock up on reserves, not get too drained and have a Golden Moment every day.
- I have needs which may be different from my family's, my friends or colleagues.
- I do not have to say 'yes' to all requests – or feel guilty if I say 'no'.
- The 'perfect' parent, partner, child or career person does not exist – the 'good-enough' one does!
- I have the right to be treated with respect as a worthwhile, intelligent and competent person.
- I don't have to have everyone's approval all the time to know that I am trying my hardest.
- Time for unwinding is time well spent. I will visit the Wells regularly.
- Making mistakes is not a disaster – I can learn from these and it allows others to as well.
- I must be fair to myself and remember that, at all times especially in the face of criticism, anxiety and difficulties, **I AM DOING THE BEST THAT I CAN!!**

Above all, we need to keep a sense of humour as a happy school has laughter coming from the staffrooms as well as from the classrooms!

by Jenny Mosley, Jenny Mosley Consultancies and Positive Press Ltd.  
(Author, trainer, consultant and speaker on positive behaviour, staff well-being, lunchtimes and playtimes, social skills and self-esteem.)  
For in-depth training, consultancy and conferencing phone 01225 767157  
For resources go to [www.circle-time.co.uk](http://www.circle-time.co.uk)  
[circletime@jennymosley.co.uk](mailto:circletime@jennymosley.co.uk)

