

Be You Virtual Conference Transcript

Setting the scene for wellbeing

Presented by Patrice O'Brien and Geri Sumpter

Patrice O'Brien

Hello, and welcome to the Be You Virtual Conference, Wellbeing: You, Me, and Us. It is such a delight to be here and to have all of you joining us today and thanks to everyone who is joining us, I can see already that we've got people logging in from all over the country, which is just extraordinary. My name's Patrice, I'm the Chief Community Officer at Beyond Blue. And as part of my role I have the absolute privilege of leading the Be You program.

And if you're someone who likes to study conference agendas, you were probably expecting to see, Kristen Douglas from headspace sitting alongside me. Unfortunately, Kristen isn't well today. And she really is genuinely devastated not to be presenting alongside me. However, given that we're talking all day today about the really important topic of educator wellbeing, we felt that it was absolutely essential that we practice what we preach and make sure that Kristen is really well and looking after herself today. So I'm really delighted to be joined by Geri Sumpter, who's the Head of Be You Delivery at Beyond Blue. Geri also has incredible experience in educator wellbeing, and she'll very ably be able to fill those big shoes left in Kristen's absence today.

Before I go any further, I would really like to acknowledge the Bunurong, Boon Wurrung and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin nations as The Traditional Custodians of the land on which Geri and I sit today. I'd like to pay my respects to elders, past, present and emerging. I would also like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia, where you're all joining us from today. And I'd like to acknowledge the continuing connection to land, waterways and community. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples around this beautiful land that we're lucky enough to call our home. And we also pay our respects to all those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples joining us on the conference today.

So in this two day Be You virtual conference, you're going to have the opportunity to hear from a wide range of experts and including really importantly, hearing directly from educators. And the conference is going to cover two key areas, educator wellbeing, and inclusion. There's sometimes a real misconception that occurs about mental health and it's seen as something that we have to manage by ourselves, you know, we need to be resilient, we need to pull ourselves together, we need to get over it or just move on.

Throughout the 10 sessions over the next two days, we're going to really work to break down that misconception and explore how actually to achieve a mentally healthy outcome. Learning communities need to work together to help every child, young person, family, and perhaps most importantly, every educator to achieve their best possible mental health. And that's why we chose the title for this conference You, Me and Us. Because when thinking about wellbeing, it's important to consider not only what we can do for ourselves, what we can do for others and what we can do for our community, but it's also important to

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consider how a mentally healthy learning community can help us to support and protect our own mental health.

This is a really interactive conference. It's an opportunity for us to really share and learn from one another because that's the best kind of learning. So I really encourage you to participate as actively as you can. There'll be polls at each session that you can get involved in. We've got a chat function and the Be You team will be monitoring questions. So we'll try and make sure that we can get answers to you throughout the day as well. We also know that many of you are big Twitter users so we also encourage you to use the Twitter handle #BeYouVirtual, to share what you're learning.

Please remember when sharing online to consider confidentiality, privacy and also your own self-care. And if you need any technical support throughout this conference, the number is shown at the bottom of this screen. Just a bit of housekeeping after this keynote there's going to be a short break, and then there'll be a prompt on your screen to join one of the three concurrent sessions. So one of these sessions is for early learning educators, and there'll be two sessions to choose from for school teachers. And at the end of the concurrent sessions, we'll all regroup for a panel session.

So for those of you who don't know about Be You or who haven't been to one of our virtual conferences before, Be You is a national initiative delivered by Beyond Blue on behalf of the Australian government with the support of our wonderful delivery partners, headspace and Early Childhood Australia. Be You is designed to help educators to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people from birth all the way through to 18 years. And Be You really provides an end-to-end approach for early learning services, primary and secondary schools. Be You offers individual educators the opportunity to build your own knowledge and confidence about mental health and wellbeing through our professional learning modules, a whole series of fact sheets and of course through the many interactive sessions and events that we run like this virtual conference.

Be You also offers resources for whole learning services and schools including tools and processes to implement a whole learning community approach to mental health and wellbeing and that's a big thing we're going to focus on today. When a school or a service signs up to Be You, they're allocated with a Be You consultant and that consultant will be able to work with you to guide you through the Be You resources and to connect you with educator networks and really to help you to develop your, your unique mental health and wellbeing approach for your own school or early learning service. Be You is completely free and it's available to every educator, early learning service and school in Australia.

And we'll be pointing towards different Be You resources throughout the conference today so keep an eye on the chat for links to those resources. When we talk about mental health it is really important to remember that for some of us that can bring up experiences that are difficult for us, especially after a really challenging year. So if at any point during the conference, you need any support, please feel free to take a break, reach out to a trusted colleague or friend for support and we also have a range of support services listed here and in the chat, so that you're aware of those. So today's topic as I said, is really setting the scene for wellbeing and it's really mind boggling to think about what we've been through over the past 12 to 18 months. So from the catastrophic black summer fires to the vast impact of the pandemic.

And even today sitting in Victoria we're thinking about Northern neighbours, with the terrible flooding in New South Wales and Queensland. And with all of this educators have been at the coalface supporting students, supporting families and being that constant pillar of strength for their communities. And that begs the question, who's supporting you? So in this session, Geri and I are really hoping to set the scene about the importance of educator wellbeing and the content that we cover will be relevant to early learning primary and secondary school educators. Personally, I've got a really long background of working in workplace mental health as does Geri and we're both deeply committed to striving for mentally healthy workplaces across Australia. I can't think of a more important topic to be talking to you about today.

Nothing more important than the wellbeing of educators. The wellbeing of each and every one of you who's joining us today. So in a moment you'll see in the chat box some questions, some of the things that Geri and I will be focusing on. So we'd love to hear your thoughts and contributions and keep an eye on that chat box throughout the presentation for more resources. But I'll tell you who can welcome you even better than I can is our wonderful chair, the honourable Julia Gillard. As many of you would know, Julia is the chair of the global partnership for education. She has a really deep passion for the importance of education for all

people. At Beyond Blue we're so lucky to have Julia as our chair and as such an enthusiastic and passionate supporter of Be You. So I'll hand over to Julia.

Julia Gillard

On behalf of everyone in Australia, I'd like to say, thank you. You go above and beyond to support children, young people, and their families. Your leadership, compassion, and professionalism strengthens communities right around the country. And you've been tested in ways I can't imagine this past year. But today is about your wellbeing. The pressure on you is immense, and we know it can take a toll on you. As one educator explained any day can range from beautiful to brutal. It's important to remember that together we can get through tough times.

Mental health and wellbeing are not things you need to manage by yourself. But something each of us can do is put ourselves first, once in a while. We must all reflect on what we need to thrive and be happy. Because when we look after our own wellbeing, we are in a better position to help others. We are better at work and at home. I enjoy getting outside for some fresh air, taking my dog for a walk on the beach and spending time with friends and family. I also think nothing cures stress quite like a good laugh. I hope you enjoy the Be You virtual conference and wish you all the best for the rest of the year.

Patrice O'Brien

So as Julia said, the pressure on educators is immense and it can take a toll on your wellbeing. We recently surveyed a thousand educators and it was really clear from their response that what educators feel is that in order to be able to support the wellbeing and learning of children and young people, it's really important that you first feel healthy and well yourself. And I think that's a really important concept that we sometimes forget about. So of course, this makes sense. You've got to be well yourself to be able to look after others. And we talk about this a lot at Beyond Blue. We talk about putting your own oxygen mask on first.

And that concept is not something that feels intuitive. It's really backed by the research and evidence as well. So given that, educator wellbeing is something that is really the forefront of the mind of the Be You team, and it's a real priority for us. And as a result of that, we've developed a range of tools to support that. And one of them is a wellbeing plan for educators. Something that we find is as educators, you're all great planners, but how often do you spend time planning for your own wellbeing? One of the things we've found over many years at Beyond Blue is that once someone becomes unwell or is struggling with their own mental health, it can be really hard at that point in time to figure out what to do.

So the idea of having a wellbeing plan developed proactively means that if you do find yourself struggling, some of the thinking about what will work to help you has already been done. So this wellbeing plan is just that, it's a proactive tool that will help you to recognise the challenges at work that might impact your wellbeing. It'll help you to recognise the signs and symptoms in yourself that might indicate that you are becoming a bit burnt out or overwhelmed.

And most importantly, it will help you to identify the actions that you can take to look after yourself. We've also recently developed a planning for wellbeing manuals and house resource. And this specifically describe ways to manage stress and includes a template for planning and wellbeing at your early learning service. Both of these resources can be found on the Be You website under wellbeing tools and there's also links available in the chat. And I'm going to hand over now to Geri to tell you a little bit more about our current work in educator wellbeing.

Geri Sumpter

Thanks Patrice. So yeah, this year we are working on a project with Monash university that's entirely focused on educator wellbeing, is something that we're super excited about seeing the results from. So this activity aims to help us understand best practice approaches to educator wellbeing through desktop research and that's going to be research globally. We're going to understand educator needs through consultation with educators early learning services and schools. And it's going to provide Be You with an approach to help us support educator wellbeing both at an individual and a whole learning community level. And I wanted you to tell you a little bit about our early findings so you get a sneak peek. So early reports from our desktop research indicates, there is currently a much larger pool of information relating to wellbeing changes at an individual level rather than at a learning community or a system level.

So we may need to address this balance in where we go with our resources. Our consultation with the education community is also telling us about some of the workplace factors that educators find helpful or protective to their wellbeing and those that present greater risk to their wellbeing. These are parallel to those risks and protective factors that Patrice will speak to you later. So I won't steal her thunder there. And in addition, it's telling us that educators welcome recommendations, support healthy habits, and mindfulness-based relaxation. And I'm very happy to say that we'll be joined by Michael Heinz from Smiling Mind tomorrow at the conference, and he'll be taking us through such a mindful based relaxation exercise.

So once our educator wellbeing approach is finalised, Be You would develop new resources, including an educator wellbeing framework to help fill the gaps in the limited resources that are currently available. And one of the things that I've learned in my many years working in workplace mental health, it's that although some of the stresses and protective factors are consistent across different industries and jobs, some are very specific to your job and that is definitely the case, we know that for educators. So the benefits of the resources at Be You will be developing is that they will be co-designed with educators so they will definitely be speaking your language and we're really excited to be able to share those with you towards the later end of this year.

Patrice O'Brien

Thanks Geri. So at the beginning of this presentation, I mentioned that common misconception that educator mental health is something that each of us needs to manage on our own. And of course there is a role that we all need to play in looking after our own wellbeing, but we should all be able to turn up to work every day in an environment that really enables us to be able to thrive and be at our best. Everyone has a role to play in ensuring that a workplace is mentally healthy. So each of us, as individuals, as leaders, and everyone who's part of the workplace, so learning community have that role to play. And this is because the evidence tells us that that's what's most effective, that approach to mental health that's shared across a whole learning community is what works best. So before delving further into what learning communities can and should do, it's helpful to understand a little bit more about mental health. And it's important to first recognise that mental health is not static as we might often think of it.

So like physical health, from a mental health perspective, you're not simply sick or well, you can be anywhere in between along that continuum. So at one end of the continuum is mental wellbeing. So let's think of that as the green end, it's where we feel really well, we're happy, we bounce out of bed in the morning, we're really thriving, we've had a good sleep, we don't have racing or intrusive thoughts and we feel ready to get through the day. In the middle of the continuum is where we start to realise that that things aren't as good. We might be having trouble sleeping. We might be experiencing some negative thoughts. We might be finding it harder to find enjoyment in things that we would usually enjoy. And then right at the other end of the continuum as we move into that red zone is when we're becoming more unwell and experiencing symptoms of mental distress.

And the protective and risk factors that Geri mentioned are some of the things that can pull us either way along the continuum. So we need to be really mindful of those in a workplace. So some of the protective factors are things like the positive relationships with our colleagues and working collaboratively, finding meaning in ourselves, in our work, and being able to bring our whole selves to the workplace. And then of course, some of those risk factors can be things like poor communication, poor relationships or workload and time management issues. And of course, periods of great uncertainty, such as the period during the Coronavirus can also impact on our wellbeing negatively. So what does a whole learning community approach that really incorporates staff wellbeing look like. It's one way we really create that supportive and inclusive community where everyone feels connected through positive relationships.

And really importantly, it's a culture where accessing mental health support is normalised and it's something that anyone can do and that's not seen as an issue. It's an environment where all staff are equipped with the knowledge to know whether they might be struggling or whether those around them might be struggling. And importantly, to be equipped with the knowledge to have a conversation, if that's the case. And it's really a mentally healthy learning communities, also really an environment where health promotion and prevention are embedded into everything that happens in that community. So it can't be standalone on the side, it needs to be embedded into just the way we work around here and all of our policies and processes.

To achieve that organisation-wide staff wellbeing approach, it's really critical that those risk factors that I mentioned earlier are minimised wherever possible. And it's not always possible to minimise risk factors.

Sometimes they do stack up. So there can be times when we're dealing with a really challenging family or where our workload pressures are increased at certain times of year, or where we're responding to external challenges that are beyond our control. And at those times where we can't completely avoid the risks, that's when we really must double down on the protective factors and ensure that we're really supporting educators. And I'm really thrilled to say that we're seeing more and more examples of early learning services in schools doing exactly this. So one of the stories we heard from an early learning service leader in Queensland said that the positive relationships in her team really helped them to get through the challenges of the pandemic.

The things that contribute to this team's positive relationships include a fail safe culture, where everyone in the team leadership included, raises their hand if they don't know something and the team works it out together. It includes the team having genuine concern for one another and knowing each other really well. So if someone is having a bad day, they can recognise it and they know that they can come and have a chat with a leader or colleagues. And finally, and this is perhaps my favourite bit, a few years ago, this team designed a secret garden attached to their office that staff can use when they need a break and it's really designed to encourage mindfulness. And of course, a garden alone or mindfulness alone will not create a mentally healthy environment. But when things like this, that support personal wellbeing, co-exist alongside a great leadership led, organisation led approach, it can be really effective.

So we're going to jump now to a poll that will come up on your screens. And we're going to ask you about what types of approaches to educator wellbeing will you look to building your learning community. And Geri's going to get the results of the poll and chat to us about those in a moment but Geri, is there anything that you would say that you've seen as a great example of this in schools or early learning services.

Gerri Sumpter

Yes, so one of the things that I always really see and find encouraging when I do see it is when there's that opportunity for educators to be talking about what they're finding stressful in their workplace, and having those open and genuine with their leaders about that. So there's often adjustments that can be made or be it small adjustments that might make really big differences to those individuals, and that's something that I've seen work really well. And it's an important part of that, that whole talking and consultation about mental health. So we're seeing some poll results come through and we've got quite a good split, and it's starting to ramp up.

So we've got a lot of people saying that they want to link to create a supportive and inclusive learning community. The next highest is around normalising about accessing mental health support, and that's certainly something that we've seen a great improvement of over this past year in particular. And then I'm loving that we're seeing the fact that we're saying that we want to incorporate well being into everything that we do, so it's not a standalone, it's just something that we do with business as usual around here. So those numbers have really ticked up, there is a nice and even spread across some of those sections. So I think we'll leave that there, and we'll put those results back through the chat in due course.

Patrice O'Brien

Thanks Geri and that's really encouraging results to hear about that. I wanted to talk a little bit about the role that leaders play in prioritising educator wellbeing, because it is an incredibly important role for leaders, and we've heard some great stories of this, so one school principal that we heard of in WA said that she was really thankful for, that she spent 20 year teaching children social and emotional skills because she really draw on these skills to get herself and her team through the challenges posed by the pandemic last year. So she used self talk to be forgiving and compassionate when families became frustrated and she told her team that families were just scared and anxious as we all were, and to try and not to take their comments personally and she said, you know, this is hard, but we're all going to get through it together, and the team really acknowledged together that they couldn't control, what they couldn't control, and focused on the things on working through the things that they could control.

So it was a really supportive approach that she was able to take. Another leader of an early learning service believes that her extensive management training helped her to understand that taking care of the wellbeing in staff, or her staff is in fact one of the most important things that she can do as a leader, and she says that if the staff are happy, then the other staff will take care of itself. So she puts a lot of effort into nurturing educator wellbeing and that's through the result and a whole lot of benefits for the services like low staff

turnover, and when the team is working through a crisis, she really focuses on empathy and care, and knows that at the end of the crisis, the most important thing is the team can maintain those positive relationships to keep supporting each other. This leader really shows respect for her staff by going out her way to make sure that they have the resources to do their job well, and even if that means her practically having to take on things to enable them to do that.

So I think that's a really important message, and this leader said that her work doing that, then influences the culture, and sort of rubs off on other staff, so it's great role modelling. Some of you might now be thinking, well that's all really nice, but the leader at my school, early learning service doesn't sound anything like those leaders, and one of the key questions that Dee come to us before the conference was, what's the role that I can play if leaders at my learning community aren't committed to creating immensely healthy environment? And some of the things that you can do is sign up to be yourself, familiarise yourself with all of the benefits of a mentally healthy learning community, come along to resources like, to events like these, build your network to really empower you to have those conversations with your leader and really encourage them to get involved, and there's some other tips about the role that you can play if you don't have that good leadership on board that we can share with you as well throughout the conference.

In terms of what you can do yourselves, it's really important that we focus on our own wellbeing. We want to spend as much time as possible in the green and the continuum where we can be thriving, and the key to this is to be aware as early as possible of when we're moving into the amber zone. So that we can put strategies in place to maintain our own wellbeing. And ideally we notice that these things ourselves, but in a mentally healthy learning community, hopefully others around us will pick up on those things as well. And Geri's going to talk a little bit more about some strategies for self care soon.

Just very quickly for me, as a leader, one of the things that I did last year to focus on my own self care was just to make sure that I got out for a walk everyday and it sounds like a simple thing, but living in Melbourne being locked down for much of last year during the pandemic and leading a very large and busy team at Beyond Blue, it was really prioritising that, and making that almost my most important thing that helped me to get through the day and be a good leader. So before I hand over to Geri, I just wanted to say that over the time we've been through, we've seen a really incredible shift in a way that people are talking about mental health, we've seen more and more people having conversations around mental health, and so I think really right now, now is the time to harness this opportunity, and to think about mental health in your own school or early learning service. Before I hand over to Geri, just on behalf of myself and the whole Be You team, I wanted to personally thank each and everyone of you joining us today for the role that you have played and continue to play in supporting children and young people through such a challenging time. I really hope you get a lot out of the conference, and most importantly, I hope that you all take away some tips to look after yourselves. Over to you, Geri.

Geri Sumpter

Thanks, Patrice. So what a great conversation to kick off of virtual conference, and I'm pleased to say that we have hundreds of you on the line from all over the country, and I understand that we also have people even representation from Canada, which is super exciting. So what I like you to do is pop in the chat, if you think you are the furthest away from where we are in Melbourne and it's great knowing that you're all out there with the same focus on improving mental health and wellbeing in our learning communities.

So I'm going to move on to talk to you a little bit about wellbeing reflective practice, and how this supports off focus on wellbeing. I'll also be talking further about a whole of learning community response, as well as focusing on wellbeing on individuals. I'll discuss how to recognise signs when you or a member of your learning community may not be travelling well, and in addition, I'll provide you some practical tips on self care and how to use Be You's notice, inquire, provide or NIP model to assist with having gentle, respectful, and supportive conversations with others around mental health, and that goes back to what Patrice was saying about that need for those respectful, empathetic, and supportive relationships.

So in relation to educator wellbeing reflective practice, I'm sure many of you are very well aware that reflective practice is all about recognising that we face unique and challenging situations on a daily basis and can use these previous experiences to better understand why and how things happen. So research tells us that educators who regularly reflect on what they, why they do it, and how they can use this new knowledge to improve practice, they achieve the best outcomes for children and families and for themselves.

So in relation to educator wellbeing, we know that reflective practice can help us as learning communities and as individuals to strengthen the language we use when we're referring to wellbeing across all aspects of the mental health continuum that Patrice mentioned earlier. It can strengthen our skills in being both proactive and reactive when thinking about those protective factors that Patrice also mentioned, and when thinking about our own self care. It can help us to listen and it can really help us to be present in conversation, and be conscious of the warning signs that may indicate that someone is not going so well. And it can also allow us the opportunity to then progress through potentially challenging conversations with the confidence and the personal tool kit to persevere using open ended questions to help our colleagues or the members of the learning community feel safe to share when they may need our help.

So it's important to make time for your reflective practice regarding wellbeing in relation to both a whole of learning community and an individual response, and help you to reflect and strengthen your own toolkit. We want you to use what you learn today to support both the check ins with yourself and with your peers and those others around you. To improve on opportunities to support wellbeing across Be You, we really talked to several hours of focus with our learning communities, and we say, if we'd focused on four things this year, what would they be? So these are those four things that we're thinking that would be good to focus on over this next year. So the first is around improving mental health literacy. So good mental health literacy is about having the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to promote mental health and to reduce the impact of mental illness, and our free Be You accredited learning modules can assist with this. We have 13 modules across five domains, and those domains being mentally healthy communities, family partnerships, learning resilience, early supports, and responding together. And within these modules, you can also find information on improving help and support seeking and also help receiving, for those who may be declining down the mental health continuum.

We also want to ensure that all schools and early learning services have awareness and visibility of the mental health support services that can be accessed and used by staff and learning community members and understand the referral pathways to those support services. And wherever possible, we won't need to focus on preventing a decline in mental health for you and others. But where this occurs, we want to ensure that you and the community is prepared to respond safely and effectively. And then to reduce further risk arising from any circumstances that may evolve include managing your critical incidents that might involve suicide attempts or deaths. And this is all reflected in a whole community approach to wellbeing which Patrice mentioned, and it aligns to these areas of focus.

So, you'll see that it's all designed around the end result of resilient students and also a resilient workforce and community. And you can see here a summarised version of this approach on the slide. So, think about these in relation to where a person might be on the mental health continuum, and reflect on what Patrice discussed around what leaders and individuals can do to enact that change. It's about all of us. The sides of the circles here really reflect where we need to place our efforts. And you can see from that prevention is where we'll start and is the biggest. What's the old saying? Prevention is better than cure, and we definitely want to stick with that. So, when we're looking at prevention, what can we do to look at those risk and protective factors and set our communities up for success, building a sense of belonging and promoting wellbeing?

What little small habits and changes can we make that help us and our peers to keep prevention activities really high on our radars? And I think it's really that that we need to really bear in mind across the conference. What are the small things that you hear about that can then really make that difference to the way, you go about your daily, your daily processes? We then go into early intervention. How do we strengthen coping and reduce risk? And we'll be talking a little bit more about how Be You can support your learning community with this as not only I progress through my presentation but also as you go through the conference in general. We look at how do we manage intervention? So, again, this is understanding those available supports and services and being aware of the referral pathways. And then, what do we need to do if we get to the pointy end where critical incidents do occur? How do we manage trauma and impact?

And again, it's about setting ourselves up for success so that we're prepared prior to those incidents occurring and we've not got that really responsive reaction. So, looking at this concept, it might still seem pretty complex at the moment and we completely appreciate that. This is why we're sort of reiterating some of these points. But what I'm going to help you to think about is seeing the whole iceberg relating to all of the people within our learning communities, not just the tip. And because whilst looking at the tip you may initially see a person who you believe might be going quite well and we can all put on that brave face and a

front and hide things about ourselves. But if we listen well and we look out for the warning signs we might be seeing signs of what is going on underneath.

They might tell us something, somebody's not going so well. So, the purple area on this slide, that underneath the water section, is where we really have the opportunity to recognise signs of decline in or poor mental health, intervene early and help push people back up that mental health continuum that Patrice talked to. People can go downhill really quickly and we want to make sure we've got the right forums and behaviours in ourselves and our teams and the right reflective practices to allow the warning signs to be picked up early and then dealt with. And we know that one in five Australian adults maybe experiencing a mental health illness in any year, noting that different statistics do exist across those younger age ranges. And it's important to remember that a whole of learning community approach must focus on keeping the well people well. So, we want to make sure that we focus not just on those that are declining but also about keeping people at that flourishing end. So, keeping at the green end of that spectrum.

As well as then making sure that we're available with that support for those that might be experiencing mental illness. So, with that whole of iceberg and whole of learning community view in mind, I'm now going to focus on understanding how to look after ourselves and each other as part of our whole learning community response, and delve into how we can really reflect, rebalance, re-energise and recalibrate for the benefit of our mental health. And that's coming off the back of what for many of us was a very challenging 2020. So, just looking at this slide, I really like this picture and what it responds to here.

So, when we're thinking about individuals, we need to really recognise that people will respond differently to circumstances despite being faced with the same situation. So, the same storm scenario, different response, and that is because they've got different capacities, so they may already have a very full emotional toll from their personal or their work circumstance, which means that an extra level of stress or that one little thing, the straw that broke the camels back, might really tip them over the edge. People have also got different strategies for coping with stress and may not have effective strategies to draw on when traumatic or challenging situations arise. People also have different anchors like, what do you pin yourself to when something challenging arises for you? It might be your families, it might be your friends, it might be your pets. We've all got those different mechanisms, what do we rely on?

And some people may have more support mechanisms and more effective mechanisms than others. And we've all got different experiences that we come along with. So, different experiences that influence or discern in how we might respond in certain circumstances. And the situation that's arising might be triggering for some but definitely not for others. So, it's unrealistic to expect everyone to respond in the same way in the same situation. And I always like to talk about what might be a molehill for one person, so they're travelling along like this and there's a little blip, can be an absolute mountain for another, and it's really important to recognise those differences. So, in 2021, we know that educators will also exist somewhere on this continuum. It's dynamic, it is not static, and we may find that at times people may be flourishing and here you'll see a different depiction of the continuum where we're talking about this from a battery perspective.

So, some people may be flourishing with a fully charged battery and enough in their tank to help them cope with the situations as they arise. However, those risk factors such as Patrice described such as high workloads, lots of change, and we all know about that from 2020, and poor workplace interactions whether with colleagues, parents, children or young people. If those things keep presenting themselves then this battery may not have the opportunity to recharge and they start to deplete. And what we want you to do is to start thinking about which of this language really resonates for you? And how you can then start using this across your learning communities? So, build your own common language.

So, if the battery thing works, use that. If the continuum works and the flourishing end versus the other end works for you, the colours on there work for you, use all of those things. And I just want to also call out that it's important to remember that a person's battery levels are not solely dependent on what's happening for them in their workplace. They bring their whole self to work, so add on top of the work situation a bit of financial stress, a bit of family sickness, a massive pile of laundry like the one I threw in my hamper this morning, and you got a situation where the charge declines quite quickly and needs to be responded to. And it's also important to remember as we're looking at this that the impact of interactions and interrelationships between all aspects of the learning community from ourselves to other staff members, to teams and to the broader community members also interplays.

So, we need to see the peoples moods, the workplace culture, personal interactions, team stress et cetera, can affect others, and we need organisational and individual responses to manage this. And we need to manage the processes we put in place as well. So, what I want you to do is to really think about and reflect as an individual and as a team, on how everybody's going within your learning community. Talk about your battery levels. Model the behaviours to show that it's safe and appropriate to do so. So, some of the things you might notice if your battery is declining into that red end, I just wanted to talk you through a few of these signs and symptoms, and they really relate to changes to our thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

You'll be looking at that screen and seeing a few of those on there that you might recognise that you've been through. For example, it might be that you're not enjoying or wanting to be involved in the things that you would normally enjoy. That might be everything from participating in meetings to going and doing that additional social piece, joining people for a reflective practice. It might be something that you used to love but now you're seeing you're noticing that change. It might be that you're becoming easily irritated or having problems with friends and family for no reason. You might be feeling unusually stressed or worried and having those sort of whirring thoughts through your head that you just can't stop.

They're some of the signs and symptoms that you might recognise in yourself but you can probably see these things in other people as well. How are other people changing around you and what is it that you see in them that might make you just think, that person's battery is not getting as charged as it needs to be? So, what can you do to stay in balance? Well, again, we've got quite a list of things that we can do and again, when we get our educator resources fully replenished at the end of our study of this year, you'll see a lot of resources to assist you with the staying in balance peace as well. Ones that I really want to call out in here.

The first one is around sleep, and the only thing to cure tiredness is having further sleep. And we all need to remember the importance of sleep, hygiene and doing everything we need to do to make sure that we are replenished on a day to day basis. I'm a real exercise freak, so I'll also call out exercise. There's nothing better than getting out there whether it's a walk or a run. Getting out with your dog to really sort of set the tone, break the circuit in your mind and really reconnect with some healthy thoughts. And the last one I want to talk about because I think it's a really important one for this year is around time out. And whether that's a holiday, whether that's a couple of days off, whether it's using your time in your school or service breaks. To really rest is critical and I think one thing that I definitely learned and I share is, you don't necessarily understand that you need a break until you take a break.

So, it's important about thinking, what do you need to do? What do you need to build into your life to assist you to get that downtime. The next thing I just want to talk to you about the practice is around conversations around nipping it in the bud. And this is basically introduced into your framework that we discuss in Be You, which is around notice, inquire and provide or NIP. The framework is a subject to the three professional learning modules in our early support domain of Be You, and I encourage you all to become familiar with this as part of your toolkit. And if you can, I really want you to start thinking about how do we have NIP it in the bud conversations across our practices? How do we do that with our colleagues? And how do we even do that in my personal life. The NIP it in the bud conversations don't just apply in that workplace. So this framework really allows us to think about what to do when somebody might not quite be themselves or might be struggling when that battery is depleting. And the best part of it is, is that it can be applied right across your learning community.

So using this framework in your school or service will also help you build that common language that I mentioned previously. And also help you to use your reflective practice in groups or as individuals to improve on how you do this each and every time. So I'm going to take you through the aspects of the nip. First, is the end for notice. So notice relates to those changes in feelings, thoughts, and behaviours that I mentioned previously, and which may indicate that that battery charge is depleting. It relates to ourselves and to others.

So we notice we want to think about not just recognising things in other people's but thinking about them for yourself. So whatever I talked about on those previous slides that recognise, that resonated with you, that is you noticing, and then what can you notice in others? The next is the i for inquire. So inquire is really about starting that conversation, once you've noticed those changes. It will require active listening and empathy when you're talking to others. And showing that you're really listening can make a big impact. So don't be playing on your phone while you're having the conversation or getting distracted or looking around. We know the person needs to be really listened to and heard in those conversations.

So you might start by asking, what do you think is causing these changes? In fact, someone else might notice those changes in you and raise it with you. And you might then recognise that NIP conversation is coming your way as well, which is fantastic. And the next part of the NIP is the P for provide. So P is really a great time to think about providing or obtain for yourself appropriate and timely support, whatever it is, you think will respond to the, to the answers that you got when you did that inquiry. So you then like may listen to those responses, and then plan to move on and guide and plan how to address some of the stresses and imbalances that have been raised. And if you're planning for yourself it's really thinking that, yep, we can talk about these things to other people.

But we really need to make sure we then get in this port for ourselves to put those in practice, because it's always harder to put them in practice than we think it's going to be. And we need to be continuing the NIP conversations to make sure that those conversations are actually also being continued and embedded. And it's always very important to remember that it's when you having the NIP conversations, it's not your role to try to diagnose or treat a person. And this is a really important point. But it's just to guide them along their way to receive in the appropriate professional advice or the support they may need at the time.

So thinking of the nip framework, and again with more information from our learning module, so pushing you back to remember to go back and reflect on those, please remember that we can all notice, and we can all enquire and we can all with the right level of mental health literacy, an approach to this conversation provides support. Even if this is simply encouraging the person to reach out to friends, family, GP's etc, to start the conversation, so to seek that report. And but it is important also to consider how we approach that conversation. So think about finding the right time and place. And remember to listen and communicate non judgmentally to allow that person to feel safe to open up. Some of the examples of open questions you may use when starting a conversation can be seen on the slide.

And if the person isn't, isn't ready to talk to you then try again another time, we know we need to persevere and continue with this. So in summary, self care is not a luxury, it's a necessity. And that is one sentence that I want you to remember today. It's not a luxury, it's a necessity. And it's a critical behaviour for high performing educators. So take all of these practices, reflect on these with your teams, whether you're having a NIP in the bud conversation or whether you're talking and reflecting about your battery levels. We've really got to be making sure that we are focusing on what will help keep us balanced and recognising that mental health and well being really is that precondition to performance capability and learning. And it really is all about those relationships that we build with those in and around us. So we're going to go to a poll and here you can see what are the self care strategies that you will implement following on from this following on from this conference? So Patrice, while we're doing this, what are the some of the self care practices that you that you that you do for yourself?

[Patrice O'Brien](#)

Yeah I think I mentioned earlier Geri, the walks become a big one for me. And one of the things that I've really enjoyed as life has got back to normal a bit here in Melbourne is that it's become a lasting change.

[Geri Sumpter](#)

Fantastic.

[Patrice O'Brien](#)

So, I'm really focusing now on, you know, as you said, self care shouldn't be a luxury, it should be something that we really prioritise. So I'm prioritising that now every day, which is, which is something great that I'm glad I've continued with me. And so interestingly, what's coming through in our poll is that the top response is scheduling that time out for yourself.

[Geri Sumpter](#)

Well done everybody.

[Patrice O'Brien](#)

Yeah, absolutely.

Geri Sumpter

Yeah, that is fantastic. And so I just wanted to, to move on to just fit, wrap up my conversation. And, and I love this, this sentence. And you can see in here, that term on this slide, the word listen, contains the same letters as the word silent, who knew hey, until you get spelt out to you. But it really is important when we are doing that listening, that we are doing that active listening. And that is at times, it's just been sitting in being silent, leaning into that silence to allow that other person that space to really talk. And you can do that through the reflective practice as well. So please then focus on on that as part of your conversation moving forwards. And the next one I want to call out is nothing was deeply learned by doing it was learnt through reflecting.

And so really, again, it's what, what can you do with your reflective practice, thinking about everything that Patrice and I've talked about today, everything that you're going to learn through the rest of the conference, to make sure that you are learning from what you've been through, and you're using it to your best advantage to move forwards for yourselves and for the everybody in your learning communities. So I'm going to pose you a reflective question to get you started. How can you support wellbeing planning for you, me and us in your learning community? So take that question away with you, how can you support wellbeing planning for you, me and us in your learning community? And I hope you take that as your first, your first reflective question for the day, because you're going to get many throughout this conference, and really take that back to your communities as well.

So as we conclude our first session, we really thank you for joining us. And we encourage you to engage further with Be You, learn more and keep up to date with with everywhere where we're going. And we've told you we've got heaps of exciting things coming along the way, as well as our educator wellbeing projects, we're looking at doing more enhancements to our professional learning modules, we're making them more bite size, easy for you to get access to, we're listening to your feedback, we're responding to it. And we want to make sure that you've got the time and the energy and the ability, because we're enabling you to to get access to this mental health, literacy and all the supports that you might need for your learning communities. So if you aren't yet individually registered, please do so.

If your learning community is an implementing the Be You whole learning community approach, we also encourage you to register online as a learning community because the benefit of that is that you get a support of one of our Be You consultants and they are all absolutely amazing. And you're going to be hearing from many of them across the conference.

Patrice O'Brien

And Geri, just having a look there's a couple of questions that are coming through on the chat. And I think that really all of those things that you just said we would love to answer the questions more now. But because Geri and I love this topic, so much, we haven't left ourselves a lot of time. But a lot of the questions that are coming through on the chat, I think, you know, will really be answered throughout the conference. And also through signing up to Be You and getting more information there.

Geri Sumpter

Yeah, fantastic. So again, it's that real call to action is take the take advantage of what's on offer to you here. As we said, it's all free. It's, you get the support from the amazing consultants, there's nothing to lose by joining up and starting this and obviously for the mental health well being of your communities as well. So with that, I'll say thank you very much for attending Patrice and I's session. There will now be a short break. And we'll recognise that you probably need it. And we encourage that as part of our own focus on wellbeing.

So remember to check in on how you're feeling and reach out for the support if you need it. And remember Patrice showed you the list of services that Be You offers that you can get access to to share with your learning community. Next time you'll have the option to join one of three concurrent sessions. There is one session for early learning educators and two different sessions to choose from for school teachers. You can see the link in your chat for the virtual conference sessions landing page, which will give you access to these sessions.

Or alternatively, just click the join event now button in the email confirmation you receive for this event. And at the end of the concurrent session today we'll regroup for a panel session and we've got the amazing Johanna Griggs, who is, she's the chair of our Be You National Advisory Council. So be sure to stick around for this too if you are able. Thanks very much.

Patrice O'Brien

Thank you.