

Be You Virtual Conference Transcript

Taking the lead: The principles of wellbeing

Presented by Sandra Surace, Michelle Moryc and Jason Riding

Sandra Surace

Welcome to today's session, Taking the Lead: The Principles of Wellbeing. This session is aimed at school principals and other leaders who are best placed to promote wellbeing amongst their staff whilst leading from the front. My name is Sandra Surace. I'm an education consultant with the Be You team. And before coming to Headspace, I was a teacher for many years across government, Catholic, and independent schools. During this time, I was also a leader across a variety of roles including a wellbeing leader. I've also worked at Melbourne University in the Masters of Applied Positive Psychology, which is the science of wellbeing, and I have an enormous passion in this space. This is my colleague, Michelle, and I'll hand over to her to introduce herself.

Michelle Moryc

Hi, everybody, My name is Michelle Moryc. I'm a clinical consultant in the same team as Sandra, and my background is in social work. Before coming to headspace, I worked in a number of youth organisations and worked closely with schools to support the wellbeing of the young people that I worked with. Before we begin today, we would like to acknowledge that we are speaking to you from the traditional land of the Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri peoples of the Eastern Kulin nation, and pay respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging, and those that are in the virtual space with us today. As an initiative of national reach, we would also like to acknowledge all the Traditional Owners of the lands past, present, and emerging across Australia. We're very excited to have people joining us from all over the country today. If people wish to share their own acknowledgement, please feel free to put the name of the traditional custodians of the land on which you are meeting from today in the chat box.

Sandra Surace

Be You is a national mental health initiative funded by the Australian Federal Government. It's delivered by Beyond Blue in collaboration with Early Childhood Australia and Headspace. Be You supports educators from early learning services and schools to develop positive, inclusive, and resilient learning community where every child, young person, educator, and family member can achieve their best possible mental health. It's completely free and is available to every educator, early learning service, and school in Australia.

Be You empowers educators to support children and young people's social and emotional wellbeing, as well as developing their own understanding of mental health. It offers educators online professional learning, fact sheets, webinars, and a host of other resources, as well as implementation tools to guide a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing. If you're new to Be You, be sure to register to access all the available resources and also get in touch with your Be You consultant with any questions you

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may have. This Be You virtual conference, 'Wellbeing, You, Me, Us,' covers two themes in 10 sessions over the next two days.

Today is day one, where the theme is around educator wellbeing. The various sessions explore how learning communities are supporting educator wellbeing. Today's session is developing for leadership staff around understanding the importance of a leader's personal wellbeing in support of a mentally healthy community. Tomorrow's theme is inclusion in learning communities. There, you will hear about practical strategies for building and promoting inclusion in your learning communities. So, be sure to check that one out. We warmly welcome you to today's session.

Michelle Moryc

In today's session, we aim to provide a safe space to discuss information around personal wellbeing. As part of making our virtual space safe, please consider confidentiality and privacy throughout the session when using the chat box. We would love to hear from you today, so please feel free to participate through the chat and also through polls that will be made available to you. The image you can see on the screen right now has contact details for Beyond Blue, Headspace, and a number of other services that you may find useful should you need to reach out for some external support. We acknowledge that each of us comes to this session potentially juggling many different things, and that we're all very busy. We thank you for making the time to join this session and learn more about your wellbeing. We hope that you'll come away from today feeling empowered to try some new strategies but also to highlight the strategies that already work for you.

Sandra Surace

So, what are we going to learn today? Today, we aim to support you to understand the importance of being able to regulate your emotions in your day-to-day interactions, to be able to effectively lead a mentally healthy community. We're also going to talk to you about how to notice personal changes in your body, thoughts and mind, and what is mental health continuum. Then armed with some evidence, we will reflect on some strategies that you can use to enhance your wellbeing, and also the wellbeing of your staff. We will be sharing relevant links in the chat box throughout the session as we refer to the research and the Be You resources that complement your wellbeing practice.

Michelle Moryc

So to start, we'd really love to hear from you from our first poll. The question should be on your screen right now. What is your current attitude to wellbeing as a leader in a school? Is it A, I prioritise wellbeing for myself and my staff? Is it B, I prioritise wellbeing for my staff, but not for myself? C, I know that wellbeing is important and want to work on this. Or is it D, I do not currently prioritise wellbeing due to a variety of reasons?

Sandra Surace

So, whilst the poll responses are coming through, I'd like to introduce you to a very special guest here with us today. I'd like to welcome Jason Riding. Jason is a principal for the last eight years at his current school. And prior to that, he was a principal at a small country school. Jason has been involved in teaching for the last 20 years with a background in physical education, health and science. Jason, thanks for agreeing to come and speak with us today.

Jason Riding

Thanks for having me. I'm looking forward to contributing today.

Sandra Surace

Well, we're very excited that you agreed to come along and speak with us about your experiences in leading a school and your thoughts about wellbeing. As a principal, we really appreciate you giving us your time to discuss this important topic. So, when you look at that poll question, what would you say is your current attitude to wellbeing?

Jason Riding

So, previously, I would have said I would have made wellbeing a priority for the staff and my students, but not necessarily for myself. As a principal, like most of us, we feel very strongly for those that we work with and those in our school communities, and I would have prioritised that over my own wellbeing. And it's unintentional because we give so much. We look out for those that we support, but I think that's true of many people that work in education. We all are eager to support others.

Sandra Surace

That's really interesting that you said that was you previously, so has there been a shift?

Jason Riding

Yeah, so we had a critical incident last year, which has shifted the importance of managing my own wellbeing, and one that was very difficult for our whole school community. And it was also very personally draining, so as we worked through that situation, the priority was around supporting our staff and our students, but given the effect it had on me, it's raised the awareness of me looking after myself better, and carving out those times where we intentionally look after ourselves is something that you continue to wrestle with. I don't have it all sorted out yet, but my wife is very helpful in reminding me to look after myself too.

Sandra Surace

These are really important points, Jason. I'm sure not all of us have any of it worked out really. I'm pleased to hear that your wellbeing is a priority for you, and I'm also sorry to hear about the circumstances that's brought that about. Your courage to explore personal wellbeing is a credit to you and will be elevating for your community as well. And it's so great that your wife is on board and being the champion behind you. Today's session, we will explore a little bit about the theory about Jason's great practice, and thanks for sharing that story with us.

Michelle Moryc

And thank you to you for contributing to our poll. We're going to close that off now and have a look at some of these results. So, we can see here that at 40%, which isn't a huge surprise, is that we've come back with, I know that wellbeing is important and want to work on this. So, we can completely appreciate and understand how busy you are in a school. We're all busy people, and absolutely, wellbeing is something that I think we all want to prioritise better. I mentioned before I'm a social worker. I'm so good at telling other people to take care of their own wellbeing but I could probably be a lot better at doing it for myself. So, I guess, today, as we go on, you'll learn that wellbeing does not need to add more to your plate, because, again, we know that you're super busy, but rather we want it to work in conjunction with your day-to-day structures. Thank you again for contributing.

Sandra Surace

Thanks to everyone for placing their thoughts into the poll and being part of this. It's a really interesting question to reflect upon and one that can help us see where we actually sit at this moment and then think about, "What is it that we want to do from here?" We're now going to explore some of the foundational theories that help us to understand our wellbeing.

Michelle Moryc

So, most of us may be familiar with Bronfenbrenner's systems theory and how external factors may impact on an individual. Today we want to talk about the individual in the centre of the diagram that you can see on your screen, and how the individual's wellbeing has ripple effects on others and on the community. This is because wellbeing is interconnected. What affects one individual can affect others positively or negatively. Think about your own work environment. We all want to work in an environment that is positive and supportive. It can be hard to share a workspace with someone that is consistently negative or snappy.

It can impact the culture at the workplace and we, in turn, begin to become more negative and snappy too. This is an example of how an individual's wellbeing can impact another's, and then soon the workplace may be affected. This in turn impacts things like work cohesion and relationships. This is why it's important for us as individuals to be aware of when we need to take a break or step back from a situation. Your relationship with wellbeing is paramount to a mentally healthy community. Your staff and community may model their wellbeing relationship by observing yours, so no pressure. (LAUGHS)

If you highlight self-care as a priority in your school, your staff are more likely to embed these practices, but even more powerful is if staff see your actions and how you apply your own self-care strategies to support your personal wellbeing, particularly in difficult times. However, when we are feeling well and our cup is full, because you can't pour from an empty cup, we're able to manage our stresses. That is why we need to be able to identify when we may be struggling so that we may be able to put some measures in place to support ourselves. We're also better placed to reach out to colleagues we may notice are experiencing challenge. This then creates a space where we're comfortable to talk about what's going on and support each other. This strengthens our relationships and impacts on the team, which has a ripple effect on our organisations and families. As a leader, you're placed in the centre of your community, and your wellbeing has an impact on your immediate environment as well as on your connections and indirect environment and also may compromise your social and cultural values.

Sandra Surace

Thank you, Michelle. That makes a lot of sense. So, when I think about this, as a leader, when I'm coping, I'm more able to manage the variety of responsibilities and challenges that arise as part of my day. When I feel well, I also function well, and I have enough resources to manage each day-to-day challenge, task, and interaction in a way that presents the best version of me. Others get to witness this in my action. It then becomes really clear to me that a leader's wellbeing has an enormous effect on the wellbeing of the community. This is what is meant by taking the lead, which is the title of this session today.

This is also reflected in the diagram, on the screen, as the ripples of the leader in the centre are felt in the closest circle and then reflected out further. Overall, developing greater wellbeing as a leader speaks to AITSL Principle Standard Two, which is about developing the self and others. What I'd like to highlight here is that developing the self becomes most effective when leaders create the conditions for others to understand their personal impact on others. This in turn has an effect on everyone including student outcomes.

As a school, focus is all about student outcomes, and often we don't think about caring for wellbeing as a factor to increasing this. Belongingness and connection are strengthened through unconditional positive regard for each other during all interactions, which help each of us navigate the ups and downs of life. By committing to professional development in personal health and wellbeing, each leader may effectively be able to manage the complexities of their role and model this in action to their community. What we're trying to express here is that self-awareness is the beginning step of a wellbeing practice. A dysregulated adult cannot regulate a child or another adult, and it is our ability to regulate our nervous system with strategies that is the powerful tool for us both professionally and personally. Let's have a bit of a look at a Be You video on staff wellbeing that delivers a clear message that wellbeing does start with you.

(VIDEO PLAYS)

(INSPIRING MUSIC PLAYS)

SPEAKER:

Staff wellbeing. To look after others, it's first important to look after yourself. Just like we're instructed to put on our own oxygen mask before helping others during an emergency plane landing, staff wellbeing is essential for effective teaching and learning and looking after the wellbeing of others. Stress is a part of everyday life. In small amounts, it can help us do more in less time. But prolonged stress can create a real risk of mental health issues. So, while you're putting your energy into creating a mentally healthy environment for your children and young people, it's also important to focus on the wellbeing of yourself and your colleagues.

Time pressures and workload, conflicts with colleagues, difficulty adapting to change or low self-esteem are a few things that can affect staff wellbeing. Sometimes it isn't always easy to recognise negative effects, especially when they've slowly built up over time or gone unaddressed for too long. But there's always a

way to move in a positive direction. Schools and early learning services can implement strategies to foster a culture of wellbeing, one that promotes help-seeking, creates opportunities for career growth and personal development, acknowledges a job well done, and offers resources for staff to build a sense of self-efficacy. Staff can also increase their own wellbeing through changes in diet, getting enough sleep and exercise, and reducing alcohol and drug use. Even maintaining positive social interactions and asking for help when needed create lasting positive impacts. In fact, you can start now.

Take a few moments to reflect on how you're doing. You might also like to think about and identify colleagues you can talk to and share experiences with, what plans, actions, and strategies could be implemented. Also think about the frameworks your school or service has in place to improve staff wellbeing. What plans, actions, and strategies could be implemented to ensure staff have the resources, knowledge, and environment to perform at their best. Through following small, but continued positive steps, a culture of staff wellbeing can be fostered that reduces turnover, inspires positivity and productivity, and benefits staff and children and young people alike. Be You, growing a mentally healthy generation.

(VIDEO ENDS)

Sandra Surace

That's a great video to just really think about and pause for a second about how it is important to start wellbeing with you. You might like share that with your staff, and that can be found on the Be You website.

Michelle Moryc

According to the World Health Organisation, mental health is a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises their own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community. The image you can see now is of the Be You mental health continuum. This is a visual representation of how mental health fluctuates for all of us. We're not always sitting in one space, and we move up and down the continuum constantly.

We can see the 'flourishing' and 'going OK' sections in blue and green. And this is when we're coping well. What we want to spend a bit more time talking to you about today is that orange and red section, 'struggling' and 'severely impacting everyday activities'. In these two sections, this is where we aren't coping as well. It's when we find ourselves in those spaces that we need to engage in our own wellbeing strategies and activities. This may also include reaching out to other people and also to a health professional. One thing to know is that a person with a diagnosed mental health condition does not necessarily sit in the red section. They could be sitting in flourishing, because they have good supports and strategies in place.

As we have said before, we fluctuate up and down the continuum. Think about this morning. Where may have you been sitting along this continuum? Has it changed? What might have changed it? Did you enjoy a coffee with a friend before you came into this session? Or you're stuck in traffic and got to this session late. These experiences all impact where we sit on the continuum. It's also our reactions to these experiences that further impact where we sit. An example of reactions to the experience of being stuck in traffic could go something like this. Perhaps sitting in that traffic aggravated you and put you in that orange zone as your thoughts of being late stewed in your mind.

Alternatively, whilst making you late, that traffic actually gave you the opportunity to listen to your favourite podcast or finish an audiobook that you otherwise did not have time to finish. In this example, you may be sitting in the blue section and flourishing in that moment. Sometimes it's our reactions that move us into the orange and red section but we are struggling and perhaps even severely impacted by an event. Sometimes, though, it's our actions that can move us out of there too. Sandra and I understand that schools are a really busy place and that you're all very busy people. But as we've said before, you can't pour from an empty cup. The continuum is a good visual that you can come back to but also share within your school community. We want you to start thinking about what you're already doing to take care of your wellbeing and what you can add, especially in those times when you're in those orange or red sections.

Sandra Surace

Identifying where we sit on this continuum is very important for us when considering the use of self care strategies to support our own wellbeing. There are connections between our behaviour, emotions, and

thoughts that have further impacts on our learning and our functionality, as well as within our social relationships. Often, we are more immediately aware of how we're feeling or we may notice the change in behaviour of our colleagues and friends. It's at this time, it's important to acknowledge, that we all experience stress, and that stress itself is natural, and it's not a bad emotion. It can help to motivate us and to get a task finished or to perform really well. However, stress is often described as a feeling of being overloaded, wound up, tense, worried. It can be harmful when it's consistent and unrelenting. It is at this time that your sympathetic nervous system, your fight, flight, freeze response, is on constant alert, and your body is flooded with cortisol and adrenaline, and you're in a space where things consistently appear to be crashing.

So, sitting at the orange, red of the continuum, that you see on your screen, may affect how you interact with others and how you perform in your everyday activities. It may also play out across different domains of behaviour, emotions, thoughts, your learning, and within your social interactions. You can become more self aware of where you are in the continuum, if you pay attention to these domains and how each may be expressed in you personally. So, I'd like you to think about this right now. Think about these five domain, and pop your response into the chat box. What things might you notice across your own behaviour, emotions, thoughts, learning, and social relationships that might be an indicator that stress is on a higher level for you? For me, I feel a tightness in my jaw and my shoulders at first. I know that it is different for different people. I wonder what happens for you? Have a think about it for a moment. Is it a headache? Are you snappy? Are you particularly teary? Michelle, I'm just wondering, what about you?

Michelle Moryc

Look, I can usually feel quite tense and headache-y and that's how I know. But I can absolutely relate to your jaw pain. I so get that. (LAUGHS) But what about you, Jason? We'd really like to hear from you. So, what are some of the things that you might notice across the domains of behaviour, emotions, thoughts, learning, social relationships that might be an indicator to you that your stress level is high?

Jason Riding

So for me, I feel a tightness across my chest and shoulders. Sometimes I feel it in my gut, like it just feels tight. But I'm often hunched over, feeling this constant urgency just sitting with me constantly, yeah.

Sandra Surace

Being self aware across these five domains helps me to know that I may need to employ a strategy to break the cycle of cortisol and adrenaline flow that is coursing through my body, to engage what is called my parasympathetic nervous system. This is the space of rest and digest. It's not to disregard or dismiss what's going on but rather a strategy to break the cycle of stress. In this way, we may be more able to sustain the actions to work through the challenges that are present at that time. Michelle, I wondering what's happening in the chat box. Are there some signs?

Michelle Moryc

Not a whole lot, Sandra.

Sandra Surace

OK.

Michelle Moryc

I think it can be quite difficult in some of these sessions sometimes to pop things into the chat box. It can be quite confronting. We're coming to you live. But look, I think, you know, stress is manifested differently for everybody. So, some of the things that we often hear from schools or educators, some of the common things that we sort of described, so, feeling tense, feeling headache-y. But we do know as well that it can look different for different people. So, some people maybe eat more when they're stressed. Some people eat less. Some people sleep really, really well because they're just needing that rest or they're not sleeping at all. So, I think they're some of the common things that we're probably seeing. But again, it's absolutely different for everybody.

Sandra Surace

And I think that's a really valuable point, Michelle. You might be noticing something in somebody and thinking, "I can't be stressed because I'm sleeping really well" but it's such an individual thing. So, we need to really be in tune with who we are and not look at others as to what are signs of stress. It's very individual, and knowing ourselves is very important. And I think the words you can see, on the screen, around behaviour, emotions, thoughts, your own learning, and social relationships are your key indicators. So, I really encourage you to dig deep and find what that is for you.

Michelle Moryc

So as we've mentioned, I think that we can often see different things happen for different people, and a couple of things have come through. My personal favourite (LAUGHS) is eating more chocolate. I feel that. I really, really feel that. But also struggling to focus on tasks. I totally understand that one as well. Again, I think that's a super common one. So, it's really great that some of you are aware of some of these things that are happening for you. And these are indicators to you to know where you're sitting on that mental health continuum. And they can help you to also understand and know when you need to start engaging in some of those self care strategies. So, what this looks like will depend on the time that you have. And we're gonna have a chat about this shortly.

Sandra Surace

So, what you can see on the screen now is the result from the principal health and wellbeing survey published in 2020, for the 2019 year. This is a confidential survey independent of all employer groups, professional associations and unions. This project is conducted by Associate Professor Philip Riley and his colleagues at the Australian Catholic University. From the results in the survey, principals are able to track their job-related personal health and wellbeing over time, with an individualised report returned automatically upon completion each year.

Global results build a longitudinal picture of the state of health and wellbeing for school principals nationally. If you're a principal or leader in a school at the moment, the top ten sources of stress, that are on the screen right now, may not be unfamiliar to you. What is interesting, and something that I'd like you to reflect upon at this moment, is the sources of principal support. I am actually curious as to why the external services are not part of those five sources. So, I'm gonna ask Jason a question now. From your experience, are these five sources of support something that you've seen in your role?

Jason Riding

Absolutely. These sources resonate with me quite considerably because that's often where I would go to find that support. And depending on the circumstance would be who I would go and interact with, whether it's my wife, my family, a mentor or another principal. But I find it interesting too that the external services don't make the list. And I wonder if that's due to lack of time. You're prioritising everyone else's wellbeing over yours that you are looking to support them and put strategies in place for them. But yeah, it's interesting. So, the other thing that I thought was interesting about... or maybe the reason for the not accessing the external services is because you just run out of time. And it's...yeah, like I'd said before, you've just got that...lack of time but also that lack of relationship that's being built and there's no trust with that person. So, if you don't have that trust, probably not gonna go to that person because there's other people that just know you already and can empathise with you a bit more greatly, yeah.

Sandra Surace

Thanks, Jason. That's an insightful look into your thoughts. With so many competing priorities, I guess, time is definitely a factor that leaders really wish they had a lot of time for, or had more of, rather. So, when we combine this with the trust that you're speaking of, it certainly makes sense as to why leaders look to those closest for them for that support. So, I see that you've talked about three main concepts here. Time, relationship, and trust. So, reaching out to those closest is a great strategy but sometimes these people may be impacted with their own stresses and not be able to provide what we require in that moment.

And so, this may increase our own personal stress and therefore the stress of those around us, knowing that we sit in that circle of Bronfenbrenner's theory. This, then, speaks to me of the importance of amplifying

our personal wellbeing practice to buffer the effects of stress on our own body and mind to ensure that we're not only feeling good but we can function well. And with time being a big factor, for a leader, we need to think about wellbeing as an everyday practice not just planning for that big holiday or waiting for school break.

Michelle Moryc

I just wanted to mention something interesting that's come through the chat box now, just talking to what Jason was saying, is that there's also that stigma in reaching out to external services, and I think that's a big one. I think that's one that we're all working really hard on to try and get rid of. (LAUGHS)

At the end of the day, our own personal wellbeing is super important. So, so far, we've explored a little bit about how we can notice what is going on for ourselves, in terms of our wellbeing, and to reflect and engage in our own self awareness about changes in our behaviour, emotions, thoughts, learning, and social relationships that may be indicators to us that our stress is growing. We've also discussed how stresses in our life will place us on different paths of the mental health continuum, that may lead us to be severely impacted in our everyday activities. Simply ploughing through the tough times is not a great strategy that supports long term health and wellbeing. We'll now have a look at how we can apply wellbeing practice, and it involves an intentional thought in everyday life. With time being a factor, I'm sure some of these will excite you.

Sandra Surace

Again, we can't wait for that big holiday or for Christmas break, to manage our wellbeing, and then plough through tasks feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, and stretched everyday. Wellbeing is cumulative. It's built in our day to day, moment to moment interactions with strategies that engage our parasympathetic nervous system. That's the system where we rest and digest and that fight-flight-freeze or our sympathetic nervous system is quietened. Dr Adam Fraser has described the moment of transition between an activity and the second that follows it as the third space. It is a place where we can mentally show up right for whatever comes next. So, the third space is a technique designed to help you with your thoughts and feelings, to be present in all aspects of your life. Dr Fraser explains it like this.

The first space is what's happening right now. The second space is what you're about to do. And the third space is the gap in between. This reminds me of a famous quote in the book by Victor Frankl's 'Man's Search For Meaning'. The quote is this. Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." This is a lot to think about, as moments fly past so fast, and we often act on auto pilot, not thinking moment to moment. Yet this powerful strategy can help you show up as the best version of yourself, to respond in a way that is considered. It doesn't have to be a big space. And choosing the right response is not always easy but it's there. So, I'm just wondering, how might this thought help you each day?

Michelle Moryc

I love this theory. I love that idea of the third space, and I think it's something that brings a bit of calm to me. But I also love how it fits in with the Be You Stop, Reflect, Act Framework, which is on the Be You website. You can access that. We'll help you step through it. It's located in the family partnerships domain, and it's also mentioned in the document Be You Planning for Wellbeing, Mine, Yours, Ours.' So, during that Stop phase, it asks us to pause for a moment. This can happen in the classroom, during a meeting or in your office, when you're being faced with a challenge, a difficult situation or something unexpected. This Stop phase does not have to be long. It just needs to be long enough for us to acknowledge what just happened.

The Reflect phase asks us to view what we may be feeling in our body or maybe even what we could be thinking. In some instances, this may need to be a very quick scan of yourself as time is not available for a longer reflection. However, research does tell us that if we can take that mindful moment, we can respond rather than react, and in doing so, we can reduce the stress hormones being released in our bodies. To me, this reflects Dr Fraser's third space, between what just happened and what comes next. The Act phase is really about what comes next. How do you want to show up in that next moment? With a considered approach and mindfully checking in on oneself, we can choose a response that results in a more positive outcome for all.

Sandra Surace

Thanks, Michelle. That's a great reflection of how the two go together and so much depth to this action with so many positive effects on our physical and mental wellbeing. So, I'd like to pose a question to the audience as they listen in relation to what we've just spoken about. Can you think of a moment when this strategy would have been supportive in a situation that you've found yourself recently in to bring about a positive outcome? No need to reply. It's just really something to think about.

So, if we want to decrease stress, increase wellbeing, and effectively handle problems, I'd like to introduce you to a topic and a concept developed by Allan Ting. So, Allan asks us to imagine ourselves as a smartphone. So, let's think about that for a moment. We have to charge our smartphone, and sometimes we've forgotten to put it on overnight charge, and we need it. And we notice that it's going in the red. So, we will find a place to charge it for five minutes, just to get 20%, enough to get us through.

So, if we frame this in terms of wellbeing practices, what would you need to get a five-minute recharge? This would get your personal battery up to 20%. And how do you know when you need an overnight recharge, that time when you need your battery at 100%? And sometimes we may need to identify when we need a full system upgrade, and this would be when you need to reboot your entire system and update all your apps, and the apps would be the different components of your life. If we can't change a situation, we can still develop a plan to help us manage it more effectively using a smartphone analogy. There needs to be a selection of strategies ranging from that five minute recharge to a whole system overhaul. We can't rely on one wellbeing practice alone.

Michelle Moryc

So, we're able to develop a self-care plan to assist in enhancing your resilience. On the Be You website, under the resources tab, in tools and guides, you'll find a section called wellbeing tools for you, and it's awesome. The section outlines a wide range of online apps and resources that you can use to support your mental health and wellbeing. This collection of resources offers guidance and practical strategies for educators. This is also where you can find the Be You wellbeing plans to tailor to you personally. It's definitely well worth a look. Going back to thinking about yourself as a smartphone, in developing this plan, Sandra, I'm really keen to know a little bit more about some of your self-care strategies and what you would do to get your battery up to 20%.

Sandra Surace

I have quite a few, moment to moment, five-minute recharge strategies to get myself back up to 20%, which I found especially useful in my role as an educator in a school and also as a leader. These are still my go-to strategies now. Some of my super favourites include a deep, slow, purposeful breath in and out. I also like to do a quick scaling exercise and ask myself, well, how big is this problem on a scale of one to 100, based on the catastrophe scale? Also another great tool for sharing with students in the classroom. And if I have a tiny bit more time, I used to remove myself and walk around the oval, and that was important to me as I could ground myself into the details as I walked along the path, look at the grass, notice what was colour of the leaves in the tree, and I'd remove connection to my thoughts.

In fact, I noticed that I did that just recently. I received an unexpected, difficult phone call while I was walking along the beach. It almost took all the power from my battery in one swoop. And I thought I was at 100%. Prior to that call, I had no intention to get in the water nor was I dressed for a swim. So, whoop, off came the shoes, then I noticed the tide was out. So, I chose to walk into the cold water, and I actually walked quite far away from the shore. Being far away meant that I was alone and able to actually take in my surroundings, and that meant I could feel the soft sand underneath my feet. I could feel the cold water slap against my legs, something to just snap me into that moment, and the salty breeze brush across my face. Connecting to the present in this way often helps me to step into the next moment with authenticity. Sometimes, however, this 20% recharge is not enough, and you actually need to go to 100%. So, Jason, I'm wondering when you work... when your work, and it's such a fast-paced world, what kind of things do you do for 100% recharge?

Jason Riding

So, what I do at the moment, I've recently re-joined the gym to get rid of that COVID and Christmas calories. And I'm hoping to run and get back into shape again, to participate in triathlons because I quite enjoyed doing triathlons. My background in PE is... that's what I like to do. And having a reason to train. You've got to survive the event, just get through it and finish it all. There are also good opportunities for those longer runs I do, or the longer swims, just to let your thoughts fester and process, and you sometimes come up with some solutions to some issues that have come up throughout the day. And yeah, the other thing, I suppose, with the gym, I really enjoy the group training sessions. It's a good social connection and motivation for training as well. So, that's what I like to do.

Sandra Surace

Yeah. I kind of understand some of that. Jason, I also took up running in COVID cause I think we were sitting a lot, and I found that it had a moment to quieten my mind as I pushed myself that little bit further or tried to get the next hurdle. Or I'd really tune into a song and really focused on learning those words, instead of thinking about my thoughts.

Michelle Moryc

I think, we've got a trifecta. I also took up running. (LAUGHTER) Seems to be the thing. But there are so many other ways that you can get that 100% recharge. And some of the strategies that you could try, if running's not quite your thing, is you could try and get a full night's sleep. You could meditate for 20 minutes. You could take a long walk or go to the gym. You could also see your GP or a health professional or you could have dinner with somebody in your support network. Sometimes there's even more that's needed, than overnight recharge to 100%, as you may notice you're struggling to hold that 100% charge for the whole day. I think you mentioned that before Sandra. So, this may be a good time to plan for a system upgrade. This will look different for different people because we all have different likes and dislikes.

Sandra Surace

Totally agree, Michelle. When I was working in a school and thinking of a full system upgrade, I actually reset my email conditions so that my email contacts did not take place from Friday night to Monday morning. Mmm, maybe a tip here, here, somewhere here, because as a leader, you tend to get to work on a weekend as well, something that I used to do a lot of, and I found that this was a really effective strategy, my wellbeing practice. I also ensure that I have a lot of screen-free time because there's so much screen time at work. What about you, Michelle, what's your system upgrade?

Michelle Moryc

So, I found for myself a supportive relationship with a personal trainer to be super helpful. Again, I kind of think that fits in to that whole running thing. But look for other people, it could be any kind of health professional. It could be related to fitness, could be general health, could even be a life coach. I guess what I'm more interested to hear about though, is, Jason, what do you do for a system upgrade?

Jason Riding

Good question. So, we've got a family holiday plan, and we've had to put that off for a few years, but we're all looking forward to that. I've got young children who I've also realised we had to put this off, but this is coming up in the next couple of months. So, we're really looking forward to that, to take that family holiday.

Michelle Moryc

Awesome. Thank you, Jason. Alright. We've got another poll. We really, really love to hear from you again. So, we know that we need to place more intentional focus upon our daily wellbeing strategies. So, we really want to hear what your thoughts are on this. What do you do for a 20% recharge? That's that moment to moment that supports you in your personal wellbeing. Is it self-compassion? Is it do you nurture? Is it breathing in your breath? Do you visualise? Have you got some affirmations up your sleeve? Do you just take a break? My personal favourite, speaking up and saying 'no' when you need to. Or do you ride? So,

while the poll responses are coming through, we'll hear a little bit more from Jason about the strategies that he implements in his day-to-day work.

Jason Riding

So, I've got a few things that I'll do. So, one of the things I like to do is get on a foam roller, cause my stress is the hunching thing. So, getting on that foam roller and rolling out my back is very, very helpful or if I've been on the computer for a long time. So, that's another thing that might cause that to come up and also just frees up the muscles in my stomach too. Another thing I like to do is I like to walk around the school, like, Sandra, you like to walk around the oval, I love to play with the kids - so whether it's the older kids, I'll go and play basketball with them, and realise I'm getting old, or I'll play freeze with the younger kids and always beat them.

So, that's lots of fun. But one of the things that we're really blessed to have at our site is a nature trail, and it's a great place to walk. It's about 1km long, and we've got a creek running next to it. So, it's a beautiful spot just to go and refresh your... if something's come up, to refresh your mind and think through things. My faith plays a big part in my wellbeing. So, more than just the 20% recharge, it's a whole of life thing for me. But it's a long...it can be a longer than a five minute activity, but it's something that I find is a really good circuit breaker to reposition my perspective on what's going on. So, that's really good, but I recognise not everyone has a kilometre-long nature trail, but I encourage you to look for something in your school that will help, be helpful for you.

Sandra Surace

Thanks, Jason. I'm sure all the leaders listening can take something away from that reflection of your practice. I'd like to draw your attention again to the Be You planning for wellbeing, mine, yours, and ours document, which is located in the resources tab, under tools and guides, and in the wellbeing tools view. It's a great document to reflect on what we've been talking about in today's session and also to explore your own wellbeing strategies. I'd like to close the poll results now, they should be through, and see what the audience has said. Thanks, Michelle.

Michelle Moryc

Thank you, Sandra, and thank you, Jason, for sharing. I'm mindful of time, but I can see here that the most common one that we have so far is nurture. So, that could be things like having a cup of tea, chatting to a friend, praying, that sort of thing, which sounds about right.

Sandra Surace

Yeah. I think we need to kind of nurture our soul at times and give ourselves the ability to be kind...

Michelle Moryc

Absolutely.

Sandra Surace

..because sometimes it's really difficult. We're travelling through things and we're trying to plough through things, and I think being kind to oneself and nurturing ourselves is the best thing that we can do. So, if you haven't tried one of these strategies I'd encourage you to do so, something to enhance your wellbeing. So, I'd like you to have a look at the question that's on your screen at the moment. What will you do in the next steps to create greater wellbeing in your day? So, the words 'in your day' are super important. You don't need to share that in the chat box, but rather it's a time to consider this question now or after the session.

On reflecting on your next steps to creating wellbeing, it may be nice for you to think of some of those things in the poll to try. Maybe you haven't tried writing, maybe you haven't tried something else...

Michelle Moryc

Going for a run. What all three of us have done. (LAUGHS)

Jason Riding

Doing triathlon. (CROSSTALK)

Sandra Surace

Maybe you can think about, if you don't have that nature trail, you may have an oval or a lovely path that you can walk at school, really thinking about being mindful in those areas. It's also a time that you might use the example of the third space that we chatted about and how you can use that Stop, Reflect, Act Framework from Be You, to really just stop and pause before you do the next thing, and then quieten our sympathetic nervous system.

If you do have a question, and you'd like to pop it in the chat box, do so now. We may have time to answer one question. Unfortunately, we can't answer all the questions that come through, but be in touch with your Be You consultant who may be able to assist you. If you've not registered yet for Be You, I'd like you to do so, at www.beyou.edu.au/register. You can go on the website to access the resources that we've talked about. And in fact, we have lots of things there for you including 13 hours of self-paced professional learning and other implementation tools to guide and embed a whole school practice. You can also follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube. Michelle, I'm just wondering, have any questions come through?

Michelle Moryc

Yes. I'm going to give a shout out to Carl. Thank you, your questions are awesome. I'm gonna start with the first one, cause I think that's one that's really, really pressing. And I think something that maybe, Jason, you can talk to as well. So, Carl has said he's researching and looking at how can an organisation effectively promote wellbeing in a formal manner. So, moving away from that sort of fluffy 'how are you today?' to that sort of, we're invested in your career progression and development.

Jason Riding

It's a good question, isn't it? Because there's... We can say lots of things about it, but I think one of the things that we've tried to do, out of some of the things that we've wrestled with over the last year or so, is to embed professional learning in, but also put strategies in place for staff to use. So, we meet together, every morning. Obviously we're a faith-based school, so we meet together for devotions and pray together. And then, once a week, we'll meet in smaller groups and pray for each other. That's a way of looking after each other and supporting each other. But I think those intentional professional learning strategies and then creating a space that allows for those things to be done, not just talked about. That's probably what I would say. It's a good question though.

Sandra Surace

I think that it's a great example of how we embed practice. I think there's one thing to have that professional learning, but then there needs to be that opportunity to explore that and play with it a little bit in the classroom, in the corridors, in life and then join together to see how that's working for you.

Jason Riding

And I think also staff will come up with some good ideas, themselves, about what that might look like. So, don't discount getting input from staff too, because I think that will be very helpful.

Michelle Moryc

Thank you. So, thank you for that question. Look, there is a couple more from Carl, but so thank you so much for putting those questions in there. Well worth having a think about, and hopefully Jason's been able to answer some of that for you, and perhaps that'll help with some deeper reflection for you as well.

Sandra Surace

Thank you, everyone, for joining us at today's session. We hope you've taken something away, whether that's a new idea or just affirming some of your own practice. Again, a special thank you to Jason for coming along to share first-hand experiences with us. You are a wonderful example of wellbeing leadership in your school and a great asset in that space. May you all take care of yourselves and each other, and thank you for joining us.