**Promoting Wellbeing and Personal Resilience**

* **Adults in Schools**

**Resilience** is the 'rubber ball' factor: the ability to bounce back in the event of adversity. Also the ability to cope with and rise to the inevitable challenges, problems and set-backs you meet in the course of your life, and come back stronger from them.

Although this handout is written from a perspective of adult / leader / staff resilience, the same principles mostly apply to children too. Indeed, if we are going to promote resilience as a key quality for our learners and staff, then modelling it ourselves will be very important.

These are the areas that we will be addressing in this handout:

1. Introduction
2. Mental wellbeing
3. The importance of listening, and being heard
4. The Five Wells for Wellbeing lead to personal resilience and add SPICE to your life
5. Play, laughter and having fun to boost resilience
6. **Introduction**

Tired, over-stretched adults in education do not inspire! Too many educational professionals are ignoring their own needs for wellbeing and pushing themselves down the route of always putting others first. Yet to release excellence in others not only do we need self-awareness and self-knowledge – we need oceans of energy. To find energy we need to tap into the wellsprings of our own humanity. Jenny has developed her highly acclaimed ‘Five Wells of Wellbeing’ and will teach us all how to create our own personal energy care plan based on balance and perspective.

In Jenny’s ‘golden schools’ – who have worked over a period of time to gain her Gold Award – they place staff energy as a top priority. A voluntary wellbeing committee ensure that the whole staff community engage in a range of activities to boost and support each other.

*"I have recently attended a conference day with Jenny Mosley and was totally invigorated by what I heard.  She re-lit fires within me and reminded me of why I do the job I do.  I have always shared her vision ... but in the daily toil of headship one can sometimes lose focus on what really matters - happiness!   If you want to get back to your core values and ideals - do try and attend training with Jenny.  It is very heartening." Mark Anderson, Headteacher of Huntingtower Primary School, Lincoln*

1. **Mental Health**

In any context relating to resilience, the importance of nurturing our own mental health and general wellbeing cannot be overestimated. Here are some reminders about some research in this area:

* *School culture, ethos and environment affects wellbeing and attainment. The physical and social environment in which staff and pupils spend a high proportion of every weekday may have profound effects on their physical, emotional and mental health as well as affecting their attainment.” (Promoting and improving the nation’s health: The link between pupil health and wellbeing and attainment Public Health England, 2014)*
* *“Schools can be confident that a focus on well-being and mental health not only enables them to provide healthy and happy school environments for pupils and staff and prepare the citizens of tomorrow with sound character and values, but also directly supports their more immediate mission: the promotion of effective learning.” (Weare 2015 What works in promoting social and emotional well-being and responding to mental health problems in schools?)*
* *“Mental health and well-being are fundamental to our collective and individual ability as humans to think, emote, interact with each other, earn a living and enjoy life. On this basis, the promotion, protection and restoration of mental health can be regarded as a vital concern of individuals, communities and societies throughout the world.” Bannerjee et al. (2016) Promoting Emotional Health, Well-being and Resilience in Primary Schools*

**Here Are Some Reminders from Ofsted too**

In outstanding schools:

* *Leaders and governors have created a culture that enables pupils and staff to excel. They are committed unwaveringly to setting high expectations for the conduct of pupils and staff. Relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary. (Ofsted 2016 School Inspection Framework)*
* *Staff reflect on and debate the way they teach. They feel deeply involved in their own professional development. Leaders have created a climate in which teachers are motivated and trusted to take risks and innovate in ways that are right for their pupils. (Ofsted 2016 School Inspection Framework)*
* *Leaders promote equality of opportunity and diversity exceptionally well, for pupils and staff, so that the ethos and culture of the whole school prevents any form of direct or indirect discriminatory behaviour. Leaders, staff and pupils do not tolerate prejudiced behaviour. (Ofsted 2016 School Inspection Framework)*

1. **The Importance Of Listening**

A school is only a ‘listening school’ if listening happens at all of its levels, starting with senior management. Scotland named 2016 the ‘Year of Listening’ – the aim being to raise awareness for a whole year that listening, and being listened to, is good for your mental health. So that which is good for your mental health, is also good for your resilience and your ability to cope with pressure and ‘bounce back’.

**Listening is the foundation of good communication**

Relationships and friendships, where we feel listened to, can have a huge positive impact on our sense of wellbeing. Being listened to helps everyone feel 'connected', contributing to improved feelings of self-worth, self-confidence and happiness.

Listening to our own thoughts and feelings is also important. A popular practice in recent times is 'mindfulness', which has its foundations in meditation. Mindfulness involves paying attention to the present moment and noticing sights, smells, sounds and tastes around us, as well as the thoughts and feelings that occur from one moment to the next.

(From: http://breathingspace.scot/news/2015/year-of-listening-2016)

**We like to think we are good listeners but are we** really **listening? Could we be better listeners?**

1. **The Five Wells For Wellbeing And The SPICE Of Life**

Fortunately, when we are in the midst of a typically challenging day, there are some things that we can quickly do to raise our own energy levels and rediscover our equilibrium – in other words to give our resilience a boost and to give ourselves a fighting chance to ‘bounce back’! Paying attention to ourselves in this way not only helps us recover from the knocks we have already taken, but will hopefully help to future-proof ourselves from the daily challenges that we are still to face.

As educators lead by example, failing to model positive behaviour and self-care is not really an option. If we keep putting everyone else first, we can quickly burn out. Tired leaders and teachers are less inspiring. To release excellence in others we also need acknowledge that we need to tap into the wellsprings of our own humanity first.

**What can schools do?**

In the Quality Circle Time (QCT) model schools engage in encouraging staff to negotiate a work-life balance. Schools use INSET days, staff meetings and staff circle times for considering the emotional well.

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

* Do you have an active staff wellbeing committee?
* Are there timetabled staff meetings to focus on troubled children where staff can ask for support?
* Is there a golden notice board in the staff room for positive feedback and ‘thank yous’?
* Are there termly staff meetings to focusing upon ‘lifting of spirits’? i.e. where all staff devise ways of keeping morale high?

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

A. Practicing Golden Moments Is Mindfulness

The QCT model recommends taking regular ‘Golden Moments’ – and this also means practicing mindfulness. It is a chance to think about how lucky you are in so many ways and to spend a few moments or minutes in the present moment. A Golden Moment could be taking a few minutes out to sit outside, gaze at the stars, cogitate over a cappuccino, do a yoga stretch or a mini mind relaxation – whatever acts as a mini-escape to recharge and re-balance. Taking golden moments for yourself to recharge the batteries, and become more grounded, can help you stay resilient and feel valued.

B. Visiting the Wells – for the SPICE of life!

It’s so easy to become so busy with the demands of their families, targets, paperwork and curricula that looking after ourselves can become a luxury item. Deep down we owe it to the children in our care to push the guilt aside to ensure our own energy levels are topped up and that we are feeling positive! It’s humbling to remember that energy, stress, self-esteem and self-confidence are inextricably linked with resilience and ability to enjoy life, be positive, creative and efficient.

The ‘Five Wells of Wellbeing’ is also part of my Golden Model. It focuses on replenishing **S**piritual, **P**hysical, **I**ntellectual, **C**reative, **E**motion energies – so it is also known as the **SPICE** of life. I encourage educators to create their own personal care plan based on balance and perspective and addressing these five areas.

When we metaphorically ‘visit our wells’ we help provide energy, balance and perspective. Here is what the wells can offer when we ‘visit’ them:

# Spiritual Well

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

# Physical Well

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

# Intellectual Well

Reading books, watching plays and films, debating, suggesting ideas, planning, structuring and thinking things through, helping to keep the mind expanding.

# Creative Well

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

# Emotional Well

Time enjoying unconditional time with others. Enjoy friendships, loving relationships with partner/family. Give yourself opportunities to express feelings, to talk through dilemmas in a supportive relationship. But most importantly we all need FUN!

Above all, we need to keep a sense of humour as a happy school has laughter coming from the staffrooms as well as from the classrooms! There is resilience within laughter too, as when we can laugh at ourselves or at situations, then this can help us find the energy to overcome our issues and press ahead with what we need to do.

1. **Play, Laughter And Having Fun To Boost Resilience**

What if we could tap into play and having fun to enhance our resilience, our life experiences, our professions, our relationships and our family lives as adults too?

**A Model of Human Needs That Includes Fun!**

"When we are both learning and having fun, we often look forward

to hard work and long hours; without fun, these become drudgery." W Glasser

Dr. William Glasser is an American psychiatrist, researcher, author and founder of the Reality Theory and Choice Theory. Developed in the 60s/70s it is very close to Maslow’s model of human

needs – but I particularly like it because Glasser places great emphasis on fun! At the very basic, bottom of this model is survival and at the very top is having fun.

1. Survival. We all have basic physical and emotional needs to be safe – only when these are fulfilled can we properly engage with learning.

1. Love/belonging/connection. We all have a basic need to belong, be accepted and respected by others – particularly our peers.
2. Power/significance/competence. Each one of us has a need for self-esteem and appreciation and for the sense of power that comes from achieving our own goals.
3. Freedom/autonomy. Freedom is the ability to do what we want, to have free choice. It is connected with procedural justice where we seek fair play.
4. Fun/learning. According to Glasser we all have a need for fun, which is a need to find pleasure, to play and to laugh. Glasser links the need for fun to learning. All of the higher animals play – and as we play we learn important life skills.

Further Reading

Glasser, W (1965). Reality Theory. New York: Harper & Row.

Glasser, W. (1990). The Quality School New York: Harper Perennial

Glasser, W. (1998). Choice Theory: A New Psychology of Personal Freedom, New York: Harper Collins.

Glasser, W. (1998). Choice Theory in the Classroom New York: Harper Perennial

**Why Laughter?**

When we can laugh, whether it's kindly at ourselves and our misfortunes or at something else entirely, we can gain perspective and become more relaxed. This in turn helps us to feel stronger and adaptable so that we are more likely to let go and 'go with the flow' than resist the inevitable changes that come our way.

To be laughing and resilient doesn't mean putting on the rose tinted spectacles, it means having acceptance. Accepting, as the saying goes, those things we can change and those things we cannot.

**Why Play?**

We hear that play can:

* Release endorphins;
* Improve brain functionality;
* Stimulate creativity;
* Help us to feel younger;
* Make us more energetic;
* Improve memory;
* Stimulate the growth of the cerebral cortex;
* Trigger the secretion of BDNF, essential for the growth of brain cells;
* Provide relaxation.

So play can be an important source of relaxation and stimulation for adults as well as for children. Playing with your partner, friends, co-workers, pets and children is a sure way to fuel your imagination, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and emotional well-being.

Adult play is a time to forget about work and commitments, and to be social in an unstructured, creative way. Focus your play on the actual experience, not on accomplishing any goal. There doesn’t need to be any point to the activity beyond having fun and enjoying yourself. Play could be simply goofing off with friends, sharing jokes with a co-worker, throwing a Frisbee on the beach, dressing up at Halloween with your kids, building a snowman in the yard, playing fetch with a dog, a game of charades at a party, or going for a bike ride with your spouse with no destination in mind. By giving yourself permission to play with the joyful abandon of childhood, you can reap oodles of health benefits throughout life.

by Jenny Mosley, Jenny Mosley Consultancies and Positive Press Ltd.

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For in-depth training, consultancy and conferencing phone 01225 767157

For resources go to [www.circle-time.co.uk](http://www.circle-time.co.uk)

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