

Positive and Reflective Journaling

One way that school staff can improve their individual wellbeing is through a positive and reflective journaling activity. Positive journaling involves writing about positive experiences that have occurred during the day or week. This allows one to reflect on what is going right, rather than just focusing on the struggles one is facing (Round et al., 2020). Some teachers have shared that this activity gives them time to focus on themselves, as the entire teaching day is often spent worrying about students' needs (Kelly et al., 2020). Additionally, self-reflection can also help affirm self-identity, which in turn can improve self-esteem (Kelly et al., 2020).

Materials:	Notebook, writing utensil
Duration:	20 minutes daily
Implementation:	Spend 20 mins a day writing your thoughts and feelings about positive experiences that have either occurred recently or throughout your lifetime.

Does it work?

A recent randomized control trial of 66 participants (35 teachers and 31 non-teacher employees) discovered that writing about intensely positive experiences can contribute to a reduction in anxiety and improve job satisfaction (Round et al., 2020). Half of the participants were assigned to the intervention and were asked to write about their thoughts and feelings surrounding intensely positive experiences for 20 minutes a day for 3 days. The other half of participants were assigned to a control group and asked to write about neutral events such as daily plans. Participants in the positive writing condition reported a greater reduction in anxiety and some improvements in job satisfaction following the activity, as compared to the control group. There were no significant differences reported in the outcomes between teachers and non-teacher participants.

As part of a small case study, 15 teachers participated in a week-long writing exercise in reflective journaling (Kelly et al., 2020). 93% of teachers who participated in the intervention felt that the activity improved their wellbeing. Some teachers also felt that the writing activity encouraged self-reflection, which also contributed to an improved sense of self-identity and self-regulation. One teacher shared that the activity allowed them to process and record school challenges and worries, and another shared, "Generally, experiences within education are positive, however when faced with a negative/challenging experience, the diary did make me think about how I could have approached things differently or in fact reinforce my actions at the time" (Kelly et al., 2020, p. 271).

References:

- Kelly, L., Huxford, G. & Kelly, C. (2020.) 'In our daily struggles': Diaries as a tool for teacher wellbeing. *Life Writing*, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14484528.2020.1763232>
- Round, E., Wetherell, M., Else, V. & Smith, M.A. (2020, preprint). Positive expressive writing as a

tool for alleviating burnout and enhancing wellbeing in teachers and other full-time workers.
<https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/uctj4>

ADDRESSING
WELLBEING
IN SCHOOLS

*An Educator's Practical Guide to Improving
Wellbeing*

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Fawson, S., Bates, M., & Boren, D. M. (n.d.). *Addressing Wellbeing In Schools*. EdTech Books. https://edtechbooks.org/addressing_wellbeing