

Handout: Resources to Support Educator Well-Being

This handout contains information and excerpts from the following two resources to support educator well-being:

- TeacherWISE, a research-informed program that helps educators assess their own well-being and learn specific strategies to enhance their well-being. The Center for Wellbeing in School Environments (WISE) at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital and the Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development (GUCCHD) developed the [TeacherWISE online curriculum](#) and [WISE Teacher Well-Being Workbook](#), which help educators to personalize their learning experience and focus on the areas most important to them.
- [Made to Connect Card Deck](#) from the U.S. Surgeon General's initiative to advance social connection, which provides brief strategies to encourage individuals to reflect on and strengthen their social connections and engage in exercises to enhance their well-being.

TeacherWISE

Educators can register for TeacherWISE for free at <https://teacherwise.org/> to access resources, including a six-hour self-paced online training (and certificate) and detailed 220-page workbook. These supports can help educators self-assess their practices related to well-being and solidify and sustain their learnings to enhance their well-being. Below we highlight a few sections from the [WISE Teacher Well-Being Workbook](#).

Understanding Five Components of Well-Being

TeacherWISE focuses on five components of well-being (described on page 9), using the acronym POISE, which encompasses the following:

- **Physical health** (nutrition, sleep, healthy activities such as exercise and music)
- **Occupational health** (creating positive life roles and careers)
- **Intellectual health** (continuing to grow, flourish, and find meaning as one’s life progresses)
- **Social health** (creating positive social relationships and having positive social encounters)
- **Emotional health** (feeling positive emotions and effective management of distressing emotions)



Assessing Well-Being Using the POISE Well-Being Self-Assessment Scale

The workbook (pp. 11–12) provides a 25-item self-assessment for educators to reflect on their well-being across the five POISE components (screenshots below).

POISE Well-Being Self-Assessment Scale

Please *circle* the best answer for each item (*focusing on the past 2 weeks*)

- 1=not at all (<10%)**
2=a little, (~25%)
3=moderately (~50%)
4=mostly (~75%)
5=almost always (>90%)

1. I get uninterrupted restful sleep for 6+ hours most nights.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I eat and enjoy nutritious foods and how they make me feel.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Most days I exercise/physically move for 30+ minutes (7000+ steps).	1	2	3	4	5
4. I move about so I'm not sedentary or sitting for more than 1 hour at a time during the work day.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Music and/or artistic activities are a regular enjoyable part of my life.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My work in this school fits with and fulfills my sense of purpose.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I have a strong and reliable network of supportive others at work.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I manage my time well and complete most tasks on time.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I am able to achieve my goals despite obstacles that occur.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My supervisors and I communicate well and agree on priorities.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I stimulate my mind by reading, listening, or watching (e.g. tapes, videos, movies, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
12. I regularly explore/pursue my interests or improve my skills.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I am able to help and enjoy others more than feel depleted by obstacles that interfere with helping others.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I journal, write (e.g., poetry or music), or capture pictures and take videos of my life story.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I rely on deeply held principles or spiritual values to guide my life.	1	2	3	4	5
16. My relationships with other adults are satisfying.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I seek and benefit from the input and feedback of others.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I am aware of what annoys/triggers me, and I am aware of what I do that annoys/upsets others.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I support others and acknowledge (with words/acts) their successes.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I am able to resolve conflicts in most areas of my life.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I can stay with and tolerate my painful emotions and learn from them.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I feel calm or serene most of the time.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I have developed reliable, effective ways to cope with stress.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I can manage my emotions to stay on task or work when necessary.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I enjoy living in the present and worry little about the past or future.	1	2	3	4	5

We will provide you steps and strategies to develop each of the 25 items from the POISE, within each of the five well-being areas. Below is a summary of the topics we will address:

Physical (Sleep, Exercise, and Nutrition): ITEMS 1-5

- Getting Restful, Rejuvenating Sleep
- Developing a Healthy Diet
- Getting Healthy Exercise; Living a Non-sedentary life
- Integrating Art/Music Activities into Daily Living

Occupational (Satisfaction & Rewards of Job): ITEMS 6-10

- Recognizing and Addressing Work Environment Components
- Managing Your Time Effectively
- Overcoming Procrastination
- Negotiating Within a Hierarchical System (where you may be trying to effect system changes with staff who are in higher positions of authority than you)

Intellectual (Doing What Matters and Has Meaning; Exploring Life Opportunities): ITEMS 11-15

- Finding Meaning in Daily Life
- Stimulating my mind and growth
- Doing activities that promote self-expression
- Comparing What I Do with My Time to What I Value Doing During this Life

Social (Positive Relationships and Getting Along Well with Others): ITEMS 16-20

- Sustaining Good Relationships
- Managing and Deescalating Conflict
- Identifying My Friendship Triggers
- Identifying My Humor Style
- Identifying My Classroom Triggers

Emotional (Experiencing Desired Emotions and Managing Difficult Feelings): ITEMS 21-25

- Regulating My Mood
- Coping with Stress
- Creating Calm/Serenity in My Life
- Living in the Present

You may notice that certain “areas” of your well-being are going relatively well (your scores on those 5 items are mostly 4’s or 5’s), and some areas are going less well (your scores are mostly 1’s or 2’s). Sometimes these areas remain consistent, and sometimes they may change or fluctuate over the course of a year. We will also provide you specific strategies, through the **TeacherWISE Well-Being Workbook (available freely at www.MedstarWISE.org/Resources)** to address EACH of these topics, so that you can focus on those areas (or specific items, such as sleep, coping with stress, managing conflict, etc., if you have a low score on just that item within a POISE area).

Developing a Well-Being Plan Based on Self-Assessment Results

The workbook (pp. 19–22) offers guidance on how to use the POISE Well-Being Self-Assessment Scale results to develop a well-being plan and includes example goals (screenshot below). The guidance suggests that starting small — with just one or two goals — can make things feel less overwhelming, more achievable, and leave you feeling more motivated to continue.

Physical goals might be: “I will eat salads for lunch 3 days per week and measure my success in one month,” “I will work out 4 times per week for at least 20 minutes beginning next semester and measure after 2 months,” “I will sleep at least 7 hours for 5 nights per week and see how I’ve done after 2 weeks,” or “I will listen to a playlist of my preferred music for at least 15 minutes going and returning from work and measure my success after 2 weeks.”

Occupational Goals might be: “I will get my lesson plans (or grade homework) by 7pm each day and monitor my success after 1 week,” “I will find 2 teacher mentors who I want to learn from by (Date),” “I will only check email/social media at 4 times each day, and monitor my success after 1 week,” “I will work for 50 minute segments and then take 10 minute reward breaks, and measure my success after 2 weeks.”

Intellectual Goals might be: “I will read one nonfiction book per month about history for the next 6 months,” “I will journal ½ page at least 3 times per week for this semester,” “I will read inspirational passages every night for 5 minutes at least 3 times per week and monitor my progress after 4 weeks.”

Social Goals might be: “I will try to say 3 positive things to every person for every 1 negative thing I say and measure my success after 2 weeks,” “I will arrange to be with my friends at least 3 times per week for at least 1 hr each time, by next month,” “I will use open-ended questions, affirmations, reflective comments, and summary statements in my conversations with colleagues/students during 50% of my conversations, starting tomorrow.”

Emotional Goals might be: “I will do activities that make me serene for at least 1 hr on 3 occasions per week, and measure my success in one month,” “I will seek to figure out what a survive emotion teaches me on 2 occasions per week and monitor my progress at 1 month,” “When a distressing emotion occurs, I will regroup within 10 minutes and measure my progress after 2 weeks,” “I will seek to be fully present with others for at least 10 minutes on 5 occasions each week, and monitor my progress after 3 weeks.”

Assessing and Building Resilience

Building resilience — your ability to withstand and recover from traumatic events — is critical to self-care. The workbook includes a self-assessment for educators to examine their own resilience (the Resilience Scale — POISE Version), information on how to interpret results (pp.

72–75), and guidance on how to build resilience based on self-assessment results (pp. 76–85). Below is a screenshot of one table that suggests specific strategies for increasing your resilience aligned with each item on the self-assessment scale, and information about where to find other relevant strategies.

USING POISE TO BUILD RESILIENCE

Note: Resilience items below correspond to items from the POISE Resilience Scale.

Our effort here is to help you recognize areas of resilience that are your strengths, so that you use them amidst adversities as they occur in your life, and also to consider strategies for developing resilience in your lower resilience areas. So recall the areas where you have lower scores, and in the table below you can see recommended strategies to increase your resilience for each specific area¹⁰:

Resilience Item	Resilience Strategies (if you are struggling with Resilience Items)
Physical	
1. I sleep the same number of uninterrupted hours.	If sleep difficulties arise, consider the tactics in Chapter 5.
2. I maintain my normal meal and bedtime routines.	Schedule these parts of your routine and use alarms as reminders if needed.
3. I eat healthy foods and maintain my weight.	Consider the tactics described in Chapter 5.
4. I maintain my daily activities and exercise similar numbers of hours.	Schedule these, preferably with others who'll remind/come get you to do together. Reward yourself when doing these, even if shorter/less than you planned.
Occupational	
5. I work through tasks efficiently and keep up with my work.	Identify the best times to do tasks and plan to do those, recognizing you may need more breaks during stressful circumstances. Check in with others to ensure that you are keeping up with your work.
6. I maintain the balance between my work with my home and social life.	Block off times to be with family or friends even amidst difficult times, and be present with others then ("going to make this next 2 hrs. really special/positive since I'll never get this time back, and then I can attend to other tasks"),
7. I remain organized, diligent, and thoughtful in my daily life.	Maintain your routine as much as feasible, and consider the tactics described in Chapter 9. Break up tasks with physical activities throughout the day or positive social time with others.

<p>8. I continue to feel a sense of belonging at my workplace.</p>	<p>Consider activities with others who share similar interests or tasks at work to increase cohesion.</p> <p>Identify which of your colleagues appear effective in the workplace, or seem to derive the most from it, and ask them about their experiences and practices at work.</p> <p>Review your role and goals of your workplace to see how they align with your values and interests.</p>
<p>9. I still achieve my goals despite any (or ongoing) obstacles.</p>	<p>Break goals down if they seem overwhelming so that you can identify progress.</p> <p>Identify obstacles and explore workarounds to those obstacles with others who either appear effective or share the same concerns.</p>
<p>Intellectual</p>	
<p>10. I bounce back quickly after a setback.</p>	<p>Change your narrative/description of current events; instead of replaying the event, identify what you can learn or how you can grow during this.</p> <p>Consider expressive writing about 20 minutes per day about your deeper feelings and thoughts about events, as this gives structure to your experience to help you deal with one part at a time.¹⁹</p>
<p>11. I adapt effectively to the changes caused by the event(s).</p>	<p>Identify any positives you can about the circumstance (Finding Silver Linings), such as recognizing a conflict brought out important feelings that need to be addressed.</p> <p>Address fears (such as speaking in front of others) gradually (e.g., by speaking in very small groups, or practicing talking about a subject with easier groups first).</p>
<p>12. I continue to engage in my usual interests, activities/hobbies.</p>	<p>Engage with others who share these interests.</p> <p>Think passive v. active; if you have little energy to play a sport or music, watching videos or reading about interests may be easier initially and rekindle your interests.</p> <p>Go deep on other interests that you've never pursued if familiar activities bring up painful memories.</p>
<p>13. I maintain my confidence and trust my decisions.</p>	<p>Many tasks yield failure, so recognize that it's sometimes the rare victory to relish (e.g., think of baseball players who make it on base less than 1 every 3 tries, so they have to accept and cherish their rare successes).</p> <p>Bounce decision options off of others, but always know most people would prefer to struggle or fail doing what they think best than something they don't really believe in.</p>
<p>14. I seek out resources to learn how to manage challenges I face.</p>	<p>Explore how others have contended with similar adversities through Internet searches, reading, or simply asking others.</p>

<p>15. I learn from difficult experiences and adjust my daily practices.</p>	<p>"All change comes from dissatisfaction with where you currently are" (Blaise Pascal); we grow most when things become uncomfortable for us or no longer work.</p> <p>Examine alternative practices if your current approach is unsatisfactory.</p> <p>Use your painful emotions to clarify what, when, and how things became uncomfortable for you, and think about what you can try to prevent reexperiencing those uncomfortable (but sometimes illuminating) feelings.</p>
<p>16. I continue to act in ways consistent with my core values.</p>	<p>Sometimes we pay a price for adhering to important values or practices, so it's important to think about how your circumstance positions you to live important values; and sometimes values "compete" ("should I confront someone, or is this a time to practice my forgiveness or patience?").</p>
<p>17. I maintain my perspective and focus on my broader vision of life.</p>	<p>Consider the big picture; if you "fail" at a task, remind yourself of other victories or good decisions, and consider what may have been different in this situation so you can prepare for it.</p> <p>Your life is a book and some chapters will be easy, and some will lead to tension; big things are bigger than small things/events, which can be a long or short chapter in your life.</p>
<p>Social</p>	
<p>18. I continue to help others to make things better.</p>	<p>Thinking about others, helping others and doing kind things makes us feel better. Looking outward when you're in a dark place can provide some light (clarity)</p> <p>Naikan gratefulness emphasizes 3 questions: (1) what have I received today from (person)?; (2) what have I given today to (person)?; and (3) what difficulties or trouble have I caused (person)? (the first 2 diminish complaining, and the last one helps provide clarity about steps to enhance relationships).²⁰</p>
<p>19. I talk through problems (associated with the adversity) with trusted others.</p>	<p>Identify others who'll best understand this situation, and you can trust with your personal information.</p>
<p>20. I describe my vulnerabilities or struggles to others and welcome their input.</p>	<p>Describing honestly your own mistakes in a situation both deepens your relationships and is more satisfying (than giving a face-saving depiction where even being validated leaves you feeling empty since it's based on false/distorted information)</p>
<p>21. I continue to make quality time for my friends/family.</p>	<p>Keep a calendar of birthdays and special events so that you can plan activities and/or send cards/gifts.</p> <p>Schedule mutually enjoyable activities with others so that both are motivated to follow through.</p>

<p>22. I recognize and acknowledge the good things others do.</p>	<p>Look for good/kind deeds by others and comment, verbally or in writing, to the person.</p> <p>Say good things about people to other people; be known as someone who speaks well of others.</p>
<p>23. I reach out for support and ideas from others.</p>	<p>It may be easier to “write” a short paragraph (1/2 a page maximum) about a situation, and ask for reactions, thoughts, ideas; just always know that written/texted, etc., notes may be seen by others so if predicaments are about others, it’s usually better to seek time for face to face or phone with friends to obtain input.</p>
<p>Emotional</p>	
<p>24. I reflect on my emotional reactions for insight into what may be stifling me.</p>	<p>Think about various feelings you have and even write them down, and then consider what thoughts or actions led to those feelings. See if you detect any patterns and opportunities to alter them (“gee, I get sad whenever I think about my deceased grandparent—I think I’ll write/video about my positive experiences and funny stories to share with others.”)</p>
<p>25. I still allow myself to feel emotions but move forward with my tasks.</p>	<p>While emotions are powerful, they do not last forever, but are more like a wave, so recognizing the feeling will pass and even doing other simple tasks (cleaning, taking out garbage, etc.) when emotions are intense may help.</p> <p>Efforts to ignore or repress feelings works poorly, so learn from the feeling, and move forward (e.g., “I can’t let go of a breakup, so I have to know it’ll feel sad for a while since we were together a long time, and meanwhile I can try to do easy things that are good for me with others, like walking, playing sports---it’ll be okay if I feel sad sometimes while playing.”)</p> <p>Personify your feelings and limit your engagement with them (“Sadness, I can only be with you for 5 more minutes, then I have to go grade some papers.”)</p>
<p>26. I still have positive emotions during or after adversity.</p>	<p>Be open to good things and the emotions that come with them; in every day, some positive events will occur and try to include them (“I always feel good when I go into that coffee shop on the way to work.”)</p>
<p>27. I focus on what I have the power to change.</p>	<p>Distinguish the things you can change from those you cannot, and focus your energies on those you can change.</p> <p>Some situations or people in your life cannot be altered, so “letting go through compassion” leads to more empathy, positive emotions, and feelings of control than ruminating or suppressing such feelings.²¹</p>
<p>28. I remain patient with myself.</p>	<p>Treat others as you’d wish to be treated also means you should treat yourself as you’d wish for others to treat you.</p> <p>Give yourself more time, as it does take time to understand and manage your emotions so that you make effective changes.</p>

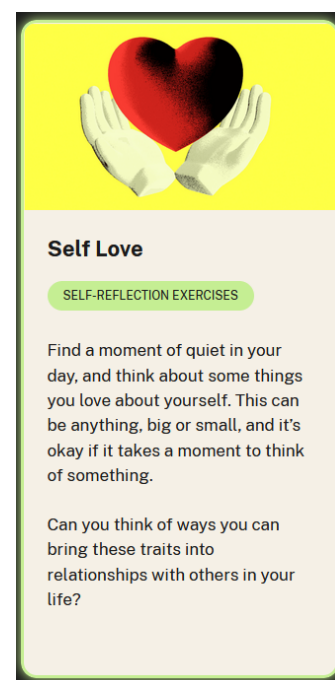
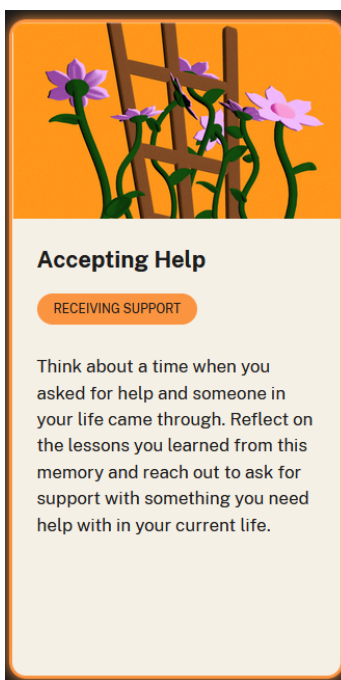
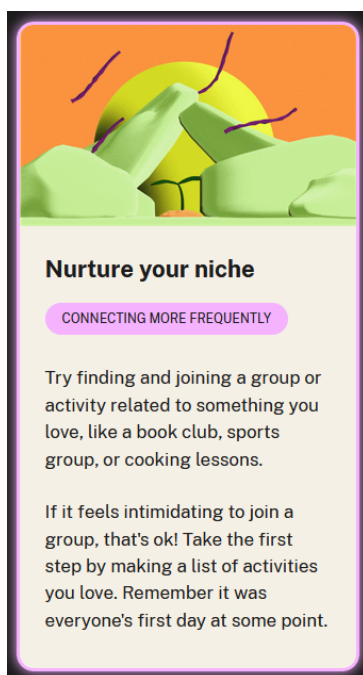
<p>29. I remain patient with others.</p>	<p>Recognize when you feel more irritable toward others or impatient with them, and don't impose your angst onto others.</p> <p>When feeling impatient with others, put yourself in their place to think about their situation and current circumstances.</p>
<p>30. I am not overcome by, or mostly just notice, my negative feelings.</p>	<p>We "overly focus" on unpleasant feelings so that we can prepare ourselves to do something different in future situations; it's important to acknowledge and learn from negative (survive) feelings, and also to notice other positive (thrive) feelings as they occur for us as well.</p>

Made to Connect Card Deck

The U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community [website](#) includes a variety of resources and strategies to improve well-being. One recommended strategy is the [5-for-5 Connection Challenge](#) to build and strengthen relationships and incorporate connection in our daily lives. The challenge includes the following steps:

1. Commit to connect.
 - Pick 5 actions and 5 days in a row to connect with people in your life.
2. Connect each day for 5 days.
 - Each day, take 1 simple action of your choice to express gratitude, offer support, or ask for help.
3. Reflect and share.
 - Take a moment to reflect on how connecting made you feel, let others know about your experience, and invite them to join the challenge.

You can download the [Made to Connect Card Deck](#) for ideas about simple actions you can take to express gratitude, give support, receive support, deepen relationships, build diverse connections, connect more frequently, and engage in self-reflection exercises. Below are screenshots of some example cards. Consider encouraging educators and staff at your school to take on this challenge using the [Connection Toolkit](#).



References

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