



American  
Heart  
Association.

# TEACHERS TALK. (AND WE'RE LISTENING.)

SCIENCE-BASED TIPS FOR TEACHER WELL-BEING.



SCHOOL STAFF TOOLKIT

# YOUR VISION VERSUS THE REALITY

YOU BECAME A TEACHER BECAUSE YOU WANTED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. YOU HAD SO MANY REASONS THAT TEACHING SPOKE TO YOU.



BUT THE REALITY CAN OFTEN BE FAR DIFFERENT THAN YOUR VISION.

# TEACHERS TALK. (AND WE'RE LISTENING.)

## LET'S FACE IT, TEACHING CAN BE HARD THESE DAYS.

In online forums, teachers share their challenges and frustrations. But the reality can often be far different than your vision.

The data tell a similar story. Studies reveal that teachers grapple with stress, pressure and burnout. And things have grown worse since the pandemic.

At the American Heart Association, we know that we speak for many people when we say this: We hear you, and we want to help.



**THIS TOOLKIT INCLUDES SEVERAL SCIENCE-BACKED TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR WELL-BEING AS A TEACHER. READ ON.**

## LET'S TALK SUPPORT.

You deserve to feel supported in your role as a teacher.

As part of this initiative, the American Heart Association is also working with school administrators to encourage open communication and support. We have created another toolkit, just for administrators, to advocate for science-based best practices for teacher well-being.

But anyone – not just administrators – can support teachers and champion their well-being. It doesn't even have to be a formalized role. Anyone within the community can promote teacher well-being, including fellow teachers, school board members, counselors, psychologists, parents or students.

## CONSIDER YOUR AVAILABLE SUPPORT.

Every school environment is different, but many school systems offer one or more of the following:

- **Teacher-to-teacher support.** Other teachers are well-equipped to understand the mounting challenges of teaching today. Whether it's informal and friendship-based, or structured through something like a teacher mentor program, such peer support can be a valuable source of empathy, encouragement and perspective.
- **Recognition for your efforts.** Sometimes just knowing that others appreciate your contribution can help. Many schools, districts and parent-teacher groups have forms of recognition that can provide a morale boost. (And signal the gratitude of administrators and parents.) If your school doesn't have a way to acknowledge teachers' efforts, try suggesting it at your next staff meeting.
- **Surveys to learn teacher insights.** Yes, teachers talk, and you deserve to be heard, too. Many school districts have opened a healthy dialogue after surveying teachers on job satisfaction, stress levels and ongoing challenges. Some teachers may feel more comfortable sharing their frustrations — and suggested solutions — anonymously.
- **Teacher ERGs (Employee Resource Groups).** These teacher-led groups can identify and promote diversity and inclusion goals within a school. Such ERGs have a powerful voice when it comes to making a workplace culture as welcoming and supportive as it can be.
- **Wellness benefits through work.** Familiarize yourself with your employee benefits. Some employer insurance plans offer mental health benefits. And many benefit packages include discounted gym memberships and other wellness-boosting opportunities.

Take inventory of what resources you have available. Make the most of your existing support network. Give yourself permission to take care of you.

# THE ABCS OF TEACHER WELL-BEING.

## SCIENCE-BASED TIPS THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL DAY.



### **Good morning! (Think of one good thing.)**

Starting your day with a small gratitude can lower blood pressure and boost your immune system.



### **Drive time: Get your mind right.**

Your morning (and late day) commute can be a time for calm and self-care. Listen to relaxing music or a podcast that focuses on well-being.



### **Starting the day: Sigh it out.**

Neuroscientists say that a “physiological sigh” – taking two breaths in, and one breath out – is a fast way to arrest stress and anxiety.



### **Class time: Affirm yourself.**

Research has pointed to the positive benefits of self-affirmations. When you feel stress coming on, lend yourself support by remembering (and saying or whispering) self-affirming statements, such as “I can handle this situation – I’ve done it before.”



### **Make lunchtime together time.**

Research shows that eating with others can reduce stress, boost self-esteem and make everyone feel more connected.



### **After work: Get active**

Physical activity helps to relieve stress, and it has many other health benefits too. So, grab those sneakers and enjoy a brisk walk. Invite a friend along!



### **Evening: Talk it out.**

Happy Hour, anyone? A chat or venting session with a co-worker, friend or partner can help reduce stress. (Or turn to a therapist, in person or by video chat.)



### **Bedtime: Good sleep hygiene.**

Sleep is important! Proper sleep equips you to face the challenges of the day. Check out [these science-backed steps](#) to foster better sleep habits. (Or visit [heart.org/sleep](https://www.heart.org/sleep).)



## LET'S TALK RESOURCES.

### WHEN YOU NEED SOME SELF-CARE ...

Know that self-care isn't self-indulgent – it's necessary. Learn how you can put your mental and physical health first, with handy, practical tips for promoting your own well-being.

### WHEN YOU NEED A PEP TALK ...

Need a little extra motivation? Turn to these **short videos**. Each features inspiring affirmations and pep talks from young people associated with our American Heart Challenge.

### WHEN YOU NEED QUICK STRESS RELIEF ...

Find a way to laugh. Maintaining a sense of humor can help you keep things in perspective. And laughter has been shown to fight stress too, providing a range of physical benefits.

### WHEN YOU NEED A FEW MOMENTS OF RELAXATION ...

Check out these **"relaxation walls"** – videos of picturesque scenery set to ambient music. These videos are great for chilling solo – or share them with your class for a quick mood reset.

### WHEN YOU WANT TO COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS ...

Consider this handy, **step-by-step gratitude journal**. This is a terrific exercise to share with your students. Remember, gratitude can have many positive benefits!

### WHEN YOU NEED A LITTLE PICK-ME-UP ...

Remember: You are making a difference in countless lives. Take a moment to celebrate yourself. You have unique skills that equip you for this career. Those same skills can help you gain a mental edge over the job's challenges.

### WHEN YOU'RE FEELING TIRED ...

Remember to prioritize good sleep – a good night's rest restores your body and improves your mood and energy when you awaken. Check out these **three tips for better sleep**.



### ABOUT THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION

For nearly 100 years, the **American Heart Association** has been fighting heart disease and stroke. We continue to promote healthy hearts and minds, based on the latest science.

This research-backed toolkit to address teacher well-being is just one of many American Heart Association resource that encourage health in the workplace and beyond. For more tips on health and well-being, visit [heart.org/stress](https://heart.org/stress).

