

Q&A from Transforming the Emotional Load, Claire Lavelle, The Hive of Wellbeing

1. Who supports the leaders to stop them feeling overwhelmed whilst focusing on supporting their colleagues?

Being a leader during this time is incredibly challenging and like everyone else, there is a need to feel connected to the right kind of support.

Questions to perhaps ask ourselves are: What do I need as an individual leader? When do I need this and how often? Who can best provide what I need at this time?

Each leader will find different ways to feel supported and connected. For some, it may mean more family time and processing the ongoing situation with space and time away from the demands of the current situations. For some, it may mean feeling connected virtually to fellow leaders in similar circumstances and talking through the demands in a safe space*. For others, it may mean speaking to a "critical friend"/coach to examine responses from others and selves in different situations within the crisis and to maintain and resourceful emotional and mental wellbeing.

I know that GTCS are providing wellbeing resources on their website for all teachers and I saw that Education Scotland and AHDS are providing different kinds of wellbeing support currently specifically for school leaders.

Another resource to look at is The Power of TED as detailed in the webinar to consider and reflect on - I was having conversations today with colleagues about leaders and some other school staff defaulting to a place of playing the role of "Rescuer" and whether or not this was resourceful. Some may have defaulted to the "Victim" role in a time of challenge too, so we need to consider how we shift to more resourceful perceptions and roles. What can I do as a leader to support the shift towards more resourceful roles? I am very happy to discuss this in a private call, if it helps, and to provide some more ideas and support.

2. Flexible working day - maybe we need to embrace this than trying to control it. What do you think?

What are the necessary practicalities that we need to consider to work towards a more flexible day? It will be interesting to see how the new school day timings will unfold as we emerge from lockdown. What will be the Scottish Government, Local Authority and unions' expectations of hours and how pupils will access schools? In groups? When am I needed physically in a school building or what are the "virtual" possibilities? Once parameters are in place, what are our new possibilities?

It throws up a wider question for me as to what our perceptions are of control, autonomy and personal agency within our working lives. Might it be the case that staff meetings and CAT sessions can now predominantly take place "virtually" regardless of whether we are in lockdown or not? Would this add to our sense of flexibility? What else can be done virtually? Off-site? Certain classes? Another question is about our individual perceptions - what made me think that I could not be flexible before with some aspects of my work? Habits? "This is what we do around here" - mindset? Or lack of trying out "virtual" options?

Related to this is another questions - After school hours, what does need to take place within the school building? Who needs to be there? How would this impact on our sense of school as a central hub for the community?

There are lots of questions to consider and the values and framework that underpin this need to be clear, fair and just for all in the learning community; but certainly there may be new ways to re-envision what we do, when and where we do it, who does it best serve (meeting pupils' needs as a priority) and why we do this.

*Reference - (See Beatty, B - Ch 8 Emotional Leadership in The Essentials of School Leadership edited by Brent Davies [2005] and source: Beatty, B {2000a} "The emotions of educational leadership: Breaking the silence," International Journal of Leadership in Education, 3[4]:331-57).