



LIFESTYLE

Happy Teacher Revolution: Create A Community for Teacher Wellness

By The Editorial Team

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Teaching is one of the most taxing professions because educators give so much of their time and energy to their work. Frequently used terms like “burnout” can imply that teachers simply can’t handle their workload or aren’t measuring up to expectations. Doris Santoro of Bowdoin College and author of *Demoralized: Why Teachers Leave the Profession They Love and How They Can Stay*, says it isn’t that educators are just overworked. Teachers are “demoralized” by a profession that doesn’t value their contributions or hard work, and by a system that focuses on test scores instead of the real work of teaching.

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In a study published in the *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, Keith Herman and Wendy Reinke, of the University of Missouri College of Education, found that:

What can we do? One movement is tackling teacher self-care at the school level and leveraging teacher relationships and support networks to collectively improve the mental health of educators.

Read more about [Quick Classroom Stress Relievers for Teachers](#)

A Happy Teacher Revolution

[Happy Teacher Revolution](#) was started by Baltimore public school educator Danna Thomas with a mission to create a network to support the mental health and wellness of teachers. “I’ve had the opportunity to connect with educators from around the world who believe in the power of social support networks like [Happy Teacher Revolution](#) to foster resilience by providing an opportunity for teachers to explore topics like vicarious trauma, caregiver burnout, compassion fatigue, toxic stress, and the demoralization of teaching,” [Thomas](#) says.

The network began in the form of a support group in her school and has since grown to hundreds of educators across the country. “We believe that teachers should not feel obligated to sacrifice their wholeness or well-being in order to perform well professionally. We hope to empower teachers to feel that living a complete, happy life runs alongside their ability to form authentic relationships with students. Thus, teachers feel empowered to stay in the classroom because they feel emotionally supported and fulfilled.”

How Happy Teacher Revolution works

In HTR groups, teachers come together, sit in a circle, and reflect upon their experiences and the HTR list of [12 Choices](#). This includes things like: “I choose to make time for sleep” and “No matter how the school year started, I choose to finish well.” Says Thomas, “Self-care isn’t selfish. Self-care is survival.” Meetings may also include mindfulness, meditation, or yoga.

Thomas now offers a [training course](#) for those who would like to bring the HTR model to their school. The course costs \$300 (often payable by a teacher’s school or district) and can count toward professional development hours or credit. “Through the power of community, educators have the space to empathize with one another and participate in a social support network proven to [alleviate the stress](#) associated with teaching,” Thomas says.



Read more about [Health Tips for Teachers](#)

Social-emotional learning – for *teachers*

With the [push for SEL in the classroom](#), teachers’ responsibilities have continued to increase outside of academic content. While teacher preparation programs are beginning to include the study of stress management and SEL into their coursework, the need for school-based SEL support for educators remains great. Much of the content available in SEL lessons for students can be used by adults, and creating an SEL teacher network can make a huge difference in your learning community’s culture.

“Social and emotional competencies influence everything from teacher-student relationships to classroom management to effective instruction to teacher burnout,” according to Stephanie M. Jones, Suzanne M. Bouffard, and Richard Weissbourd, authors of [“Educators’ Social and Emotional Skills Vital to Learning.”](#) They note that consistent SEL practice by teachers positively impacts teacher and student relationships and experiences. “Like students, educators can benefit from structures and routines that continually remind and guide them in using SEL skills. Used in ongoing ways throughout the school day, routines can take the form of structured activities (e.g., techniques for calming down) or specific language (e.g., “I messages” for stating feelings).”

How to start

Take a lesson from Happy Teacher Revolution and start your own school-based group, or incorporate social-emotional learning for adults into professional development time. “Teachers who have limited emotional regulation skills may have trouble coping with stress and struggle to model effective stress management for students,” the authors say. “Teachers with stronger SEL competencies

Additional resources

[Educator Wellness: Self-Care in a Selfless Field](#)

[Mindfulness Training Tips for Teachers](#)

[Self-Care for Teachers of Traumatized Students](#)

[The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning](#)

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