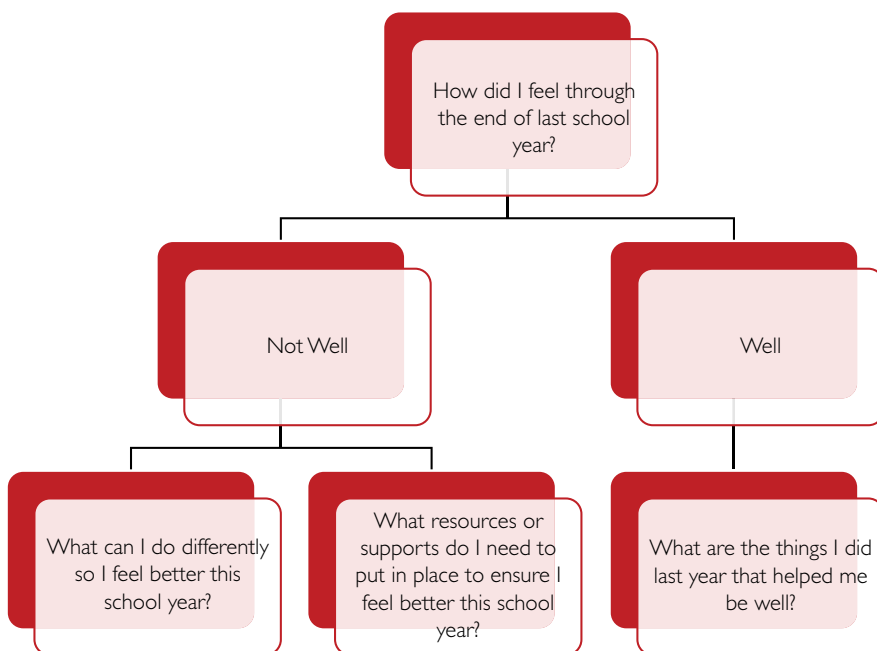


# Now is the time

*By Wade Repta, BHSc OT*

It has zoomed by even faster than summer; the first couple of months of school are almost over. Hopefully by now you are settling into your routine, and have a sense of your assignment. You are undoubtedly singularly focused on your students, and how to maximize their success for the upcoming school year. You are probably still feeling relatively fresh, hopeful, and on top of the demands associated with your job. Which means that right now, is the perfect time to think about you.

This is the time to ask yourself a few questions:



Now is the time to consider what you can do this school year for your own wellness. Did you finish last year feeling well? If so, you obviously did some things right. But we can't just assume the same thing will happen again without some planning. Stressors that didn't pop up last year may present themselves this school year, and you want to be as prepared as possible. Think back to the times when there were conflicts, challenging student behaviours, high marking or curriculum demands and think about the positive strategies you utilized to get through them. Perhaps you were planning ahead and did your report cards early? Maybe you made sure to do some deep breathing and considered how best to attack problems as they arose instead of simply reacting to them in the moment? Maybe you saw a counsellor before your mood dropped? Whatever you did, this is a good time to consider how best to keep those practices in place and, if possible, build on them so you are in an even better position to remain well this school year.

If you had a challenging year last year and experienced challenges in any of the wellness areas (physical, mental, emotional, etc.), this is the time to sit down and plan out what you can do differently. As the saying goes, "If you always do what you always did you will

always get what you always got." How are you going to structure your time this year so that you don't need to be at school late every night? What can you do so your back and neck are not in agony by February? Who can you talk to about your mood and the fact that it has been relatively low for a while now? What can you do to address the fact that every Sunday night you don't sleep because of anxiety and worry over the coming week?

There are many ways to address a wellness plan for the school year. One way is to use the tools in The Well Teacher to guide you through the process of considering your wellness, developing a wellness plan, and then identifying how to achieve your wellness goals with a Goal Flow. By analyzing your wellness with a tool like the Wellness Map, you can see which areas of wellness are strengths for you and which areas you might want to address. Complete a Wellness Map by considering how you are feeling right now; and then think back to June. What would your map have looked like then? Would your June Wellness Map have looked different from your Wellness Map today? Use this information to help with the goal setting process as it may help you to better understand how your wellness needs and your capacity to achieve your goals may change throughout

the school year. Use a Goal Flow to not only identify your most realistic goals, but also the specific steps needed to achieve them.

This is also the time to put resources in place; before you are feeling too busy, and the weather is bad, and it's dark, and you are, for good reason, just too tired. As always, the first step is to talk with your doctor. If you are feeling pain maybe set up that initial consultation with the physiotherapist or kinesiologist. Call the Member Assistance Program or a local counsellor now, before you are emotionally drained, to stay in front of challenges related to mood, anxiety, and even burnout. Consider how to set your room up, not just from a student perspective but from an ergonomic perspective as well so that you are in the best position to manage fatigue, discomfort, or disorganization. Consult with a speech language pathologist if you noticed voice changes last year. The key is to reach out for help now, knowing what your struggles looked like last year, so that they don't continue this year. Or, so they can at least be lessened.

It is never easy to take time to consider your own needs, especially if you are starting the year feeling pretty well. In general, we tend to be much more reactive than proactive when it comes to our own wellness. However, by taking even 20 minutes to think about the questions above, you are giving yourself a chance to experience a more positive year. And if not a more positive year, at least you might feel better while tackling the challenges of the profession. Set one goal, do one thing different, make one phone call to book an appointment. This will only get harder as the school year progresses. Now is the best time to think about you.

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