

Building hope and resilience during extraordinary times of change

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Acknowledgement of Country

Learning outcomes

01

Outline key elements of wellbeing

02

Describe factors which impact on wellbeing

03

Explain impacts of extraordinary change or disasters on wellbeing

04

Outline ways that principals and teachers can support their own and others' wellbeing during times of extraordinary change

A field of vibrant red and blue flowers, likely roses and delphiniums, with green foliage. The image is slightly blurred and has a dark overlay, making the white text stand out prominently in the center.

Your self-care during and
after the webinar

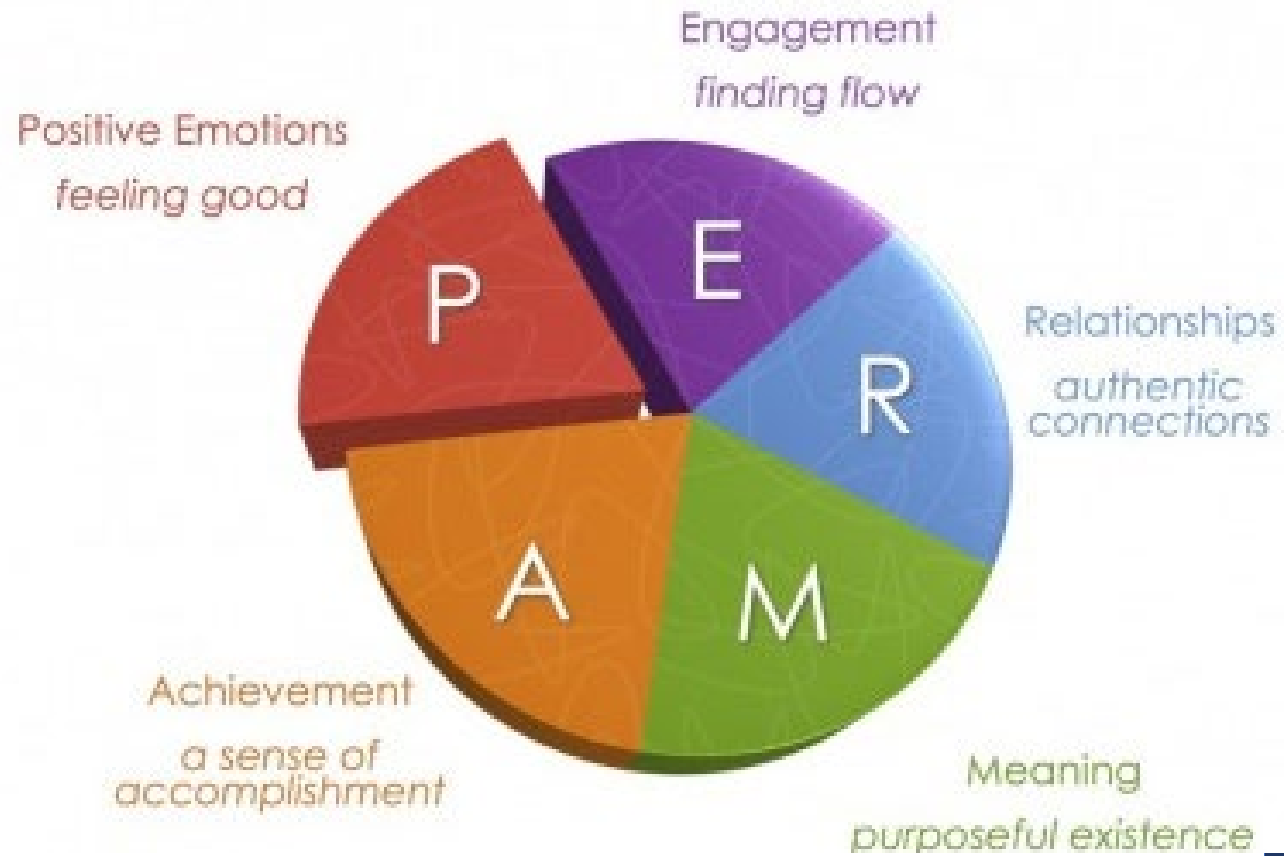
Poll 1: Who are we?

1. Your role:

- (a) Principal
- (b) Classroom teacher
- (c) Education support role
- (d) Student wellbeing role

2. Your State/territory

- (a) Victoria
- (b) New South Wales
- (c) Queensland
- (d) South Australia
- (e) Northern Territory
- (f) Western Australia
- (g) ACT
- (h) Tasmania



Wellbeing

Seligman's PERMA Model

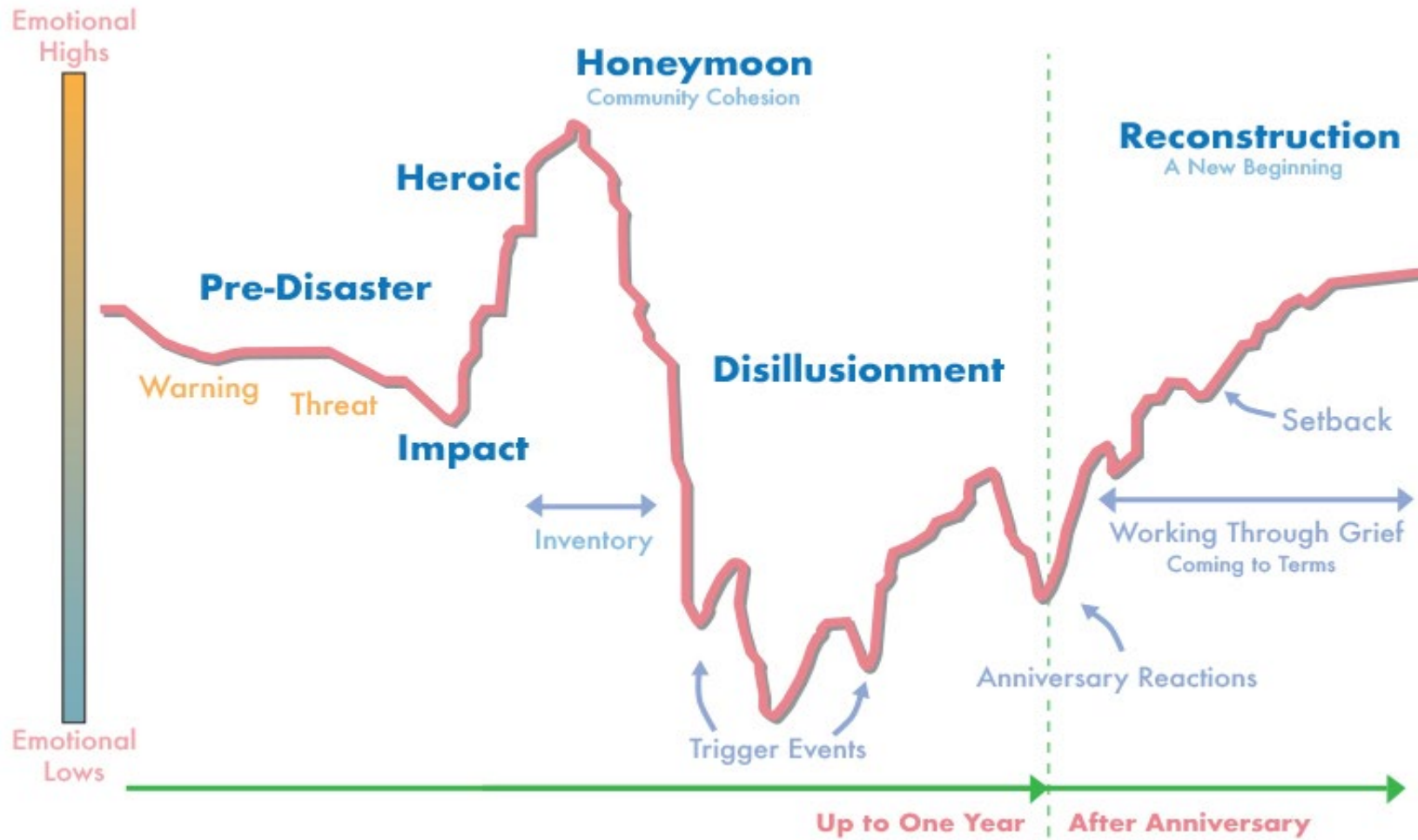
<https://positivepsychology.com/perma-model/>

Wellbeing can be impacted by a range of factors:

Personal

Social

Systemic



Adapted from Zunin & Myers as cited in DeWolfe, D. J., 2000. Training manual for mental health and human service workers in major disasters (2nd ed., HHS Publication No. ADM 90-538). Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services.

Poll 2: Current impacts of the pandemic on your wellbeing

How are you currently feeling about the impact of the pandemic:

10 Energised/enthusiastic

9

8

7

6

5 Okay

4

3

2

1 Exhausted/overwhelmed

Covid-19 and mental health

- Public health emergencies may affect the health, safety and wellbeing of both individuals (causing, for example, insecurity, confusion, emotional isolation, and stigma) and communities (owing to economic loss, work and school closures, inadequate resources for medical response, and deficient distribution of necessities).
- These effects may translate into a range of emotional reactions (such as distress or psychiatric conditions), unhealthy behaviours (such as excessive substance use), and noncompliance with public health directives (such as home confinement and vaccination) in people who contract the disease and in the general population.
- After disaster, most people are resilient and do not succumb to psychopathology. Indeed, some people find new strengths.
- Some groups may be more vulnerable than others to the psychosocial effects of pandemics. In particular, people who contract the disease, those at heightened risk for it, and people with pre-existing medical, psychiatric or substance use problems are at increased risk for adverse psychosocial outcomes.

Pfefferbaum, B. & North, C.S. (2020). Mental health and the Covid-19 pandemic. *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

What have we learned from previous periods of significant change or disasters?

1. Christchurch Earthquake, 2011 – Emotion regulation strategies employed by teachers in the early moments of the earthquake (small study – 20 teachers)

- Coping with stress shapes emotions because appraisals of threat or challenge may elicit unpleasant emotions. A prolonged stress response might be due to prolonged real danger or to ongoing appraisals or perceptions of danger.
- Teaching is an emotion-fueled profession, with teachers' emotions spanning the range from "positive" emotions such as joy, wonder, excitement, love and satisfaction to "negative" emotions such as frustration, guilt and anger.
- Sources of teachers' emotions tend to include the successes and failures of their students, interactions and relationships with students, parents, colleagues and administrators, and their beliefs about, and strategies used in their teaching.
- Teachers' appraisals of events during classroom life are the most likely antecedents to their emotions.
- Emotional regulation is the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions.



Types of responsive strategies at the time of the earthquake reported by the teachers:

- Behavioural (2nd most popular) – e.g. deep breaths, keeping calm, reassuring children, distraction, carry on, put on teacher hat
 - Attention deployment – e.g. put on a DVD, singing
 - Cognitive (most popular) – self-talk, thoughts/beliefs – children come first
 - Automatic – You just did it, we just had to carry on, automatically step in
 - Social cognitive – took the lead from others
 - Adrenaline – your adrenaline kicked in
 - Peritraumatic dissociation – almost disconnected from it.
-
- May be at risk of subsequent negative psychological and emotional outcomes due to their exposure to trauma and reported experience of peritraumatic fear at the time.
 - Some strategies may predispose them to longer-term dysfunctional consequences.

2. Disaster impacts on students and staff from a specialist, trauma-informed Australian school - Hazelwood Mine Fire event (8 teachers) – impact on student and staff wellbeing – specialist school setting for students aged 12 – 18 years who have stopped attending or been excluded from mainstream schools

- Impact on staff wellbeing – frustration and anxiety about the uncertain duration and implications of the event; difficult to receive information; time taken to move school's resources to the new location and pack up each week; lack of consistency and routine; concerns about the potential cumulative impact of trauma exposure on staff and their family due to previous bushfire exposure.
 - Also resilience, working co-operatively and in the best interests of students.
 - Need for increased decision making and consultation between school leadership and teachers.
- Trauma-informed teaching model implemented – emotion and behaviour regulation, maintenance of student-staff relationships and attachment, engagement with schooling and stamina and resilience.
- **Recommendations –**
 - adopt trauma-informed approaches more broadly in educational settings – increase staff awareness of the importance of monitoring student behaviour and maintaining stable routines, school engagement and increase students' emotional and behavioural self-regulatory skills. Also need clear school policy and staff training.
 - Specific disaster response recommendations/co-ordinated crisis response teams and protocols – systems, effective communication
 - Support for parents and families – important if staff are dealing with the same issues as students and families. Staff can also experience levels of secondary posttraumatic stress when working with traumatised young people.

Berger, E., Carroll, M., Maybery, D. & Harrison, D. (2018). Disaster impacts on students and staff from a specialist, trauma-informed Australian school. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*, 11:521 – 530.



3. Daily singing in a school severely affected by earthquake

Christchurch earthquakes – Waitakiri School – staff and students participated in daily singing specifically to promote wellbeing. Action research model – 2 year project.

Findings:

- Teachers strongly believed that singing would be good for the students
- Teachers were prepared to ‘have a go’ and ‘see what works’
- Singing is a motivating, equalising, accessible activity
- Teachers and students used readily available resources
- Children were given high levels of autonomy and choice
- Teachers took a non-judgemental approach
- Teachers fostered the opportunities singing afforded for connection and a sense of belonging
- Teachers considered the mood of the group when choosing songs
- Students receive music education, and this is different to singing for wellbeing

When communities are vulnerable over an extended time frame, they experience stress collectively, appraise collectively and respond collectively. Instead of a fight, flight or freeze response, they might “flock”, connecting to access, share, mobilise and sustain use of resources. This solidarity can counter ongoing risk and support positive adjustment – resilience can occur as a transactional-ecological process.

Teachers’ intuitive insistence that the primary focus of the daily singing should be on having fun seems critical. Music activities that focus on expression and fun should be encouraged to enable students to experience music as engaging, enjoyable and useful in terms of communicating feelings.

Rickson, D., Legg, R. & Reynolds, D. (2018). Daily singing in a school severely affected by earthquakes: Potentially contributing to both wellbeing and music education agendas? *New Zealand Journal of Teachers’ Work*, Vol. 15, Issue 1, 63 – 84.

4. Social and occupational factors associated with psychological wellbeing among occupational groups affected by disaster: a systematic review


The psychological impact of disasters on employees was associated with:

1. **Pre-disaster factors** – experience/training; income; life events; health; job satisfaction.
2. **Peri-disaster factors** – exposure; peri-traumatic experiences; perceptions of safety; injury.
3. **Social factors** – organizational support; social support generally.
4. **Post-disaster factors** – impact on life.

Maintaining wellbeing following a disaster:

- Social support
- Supportive and approachable managers
- Training workshops aimed at building team cohesion
- Monitoring of those most impacted or vulnerable to distress
- Knowing what normal stress reactions are/provision of information about coping and where to seek help
- Psychological First Aid as a framework for supporting peers in sensitive, practical ways (assess needs, supportive listening, connecting to information or support).

Brooks, S.K., Dunn, R., Amlot, R., Rubin, G.J. & Greenberg, N. (2017). Social and occupational factors associated with psychological wellbeing among occupational groups affected by disaster: a systematic review. *Journal of Mental Health*, 26:4, 373 – 384.



Personal wellbeing planning – individual and school community

Physical health – exercise, sleep, diet

Mental health – emotional intelligence, coping strategies, positive self-talk, balanced lifestyle, interests/hobbies, social life

Emotional agility – ability to unhook from unhelpful patterns of thought and behaviour

Problem solving skills

Stress management strategies

Reflecting on personal and professional values

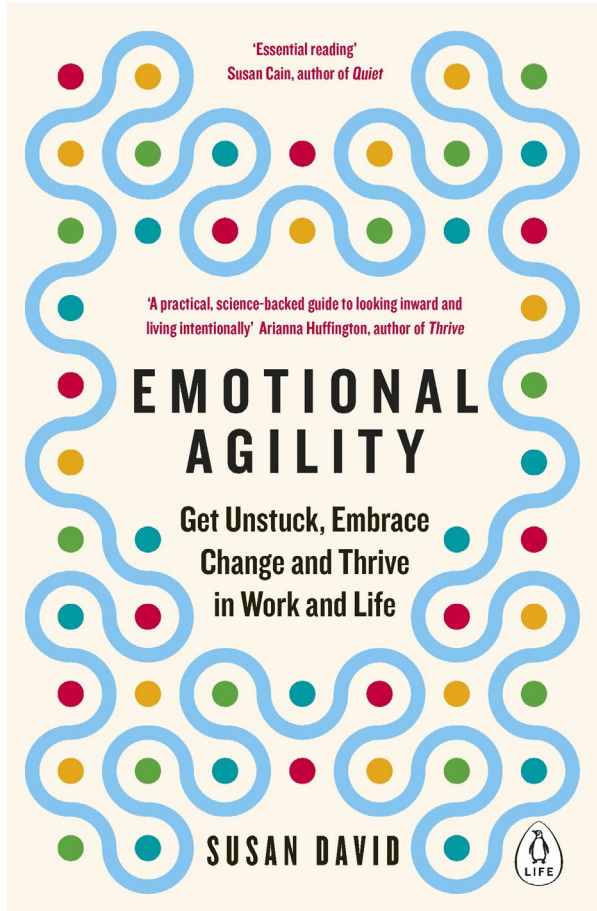
Help seeking

Supporting colleagues

Engaging in school wellbeing activities

Contributing to school wellbeing ongoing improvement

Emotional agility




https://www.ted.com/talks/susan_david_the_gift_and_power_of_emotional_courage?language=en



Planning for action

What are you doing already?



What else could you do?



Dates to commence/review



Action required

Poll 3: Which area of self-care could you improve upon at the moment?

- Physical health – exercise, sleep, diet
- Mental health – emotional intelligence, coping strategies, positive self-talk, balanced lifestyle, interests/hobbies, social life
- Emotional agility – ability to unhook from unhelpful patterns of thought and behaviour
- Problem solving skills
- Stress management strategies
- Reflecting on personal and professional values
- Help seeking
- Supporting colleagues
- Engaging in school wellbeing activities
- Contributing to school wellbeing ongoing improvement

Useful websites and resources

- Teacher wellbeing during COVID-19 – Rebecca Collie and Andrew Martin, Teacher Magazine, April, 2020.
www.teachermagazine.com.au/articles/teacher-wellbeing-during-covid-19
- Teacher wellbeing in a changing environment. ReachOut
<https://schools.au.reachout.com/articles/teacher-wellbeing-in-a-changing-environment>
- Prioritising self-care while working at home. Edutopia.
<https://www.edutopia.org/article/prioritizing-self-care-while-working-home>
- Australian Child & Adolescent Trauma, Loss & Grief Network
<https://earlytraumagrief.anu.edu.au/>



Questions?