Personal leadership for wellbeing

Tammy Gregersen
American University of Sharjah, UAE
tgregersen@aus.edu

Hayo Reinders
King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Thailand
hayoreinders@gmail.com

"Becoming a leader is synonymous with becoming yourself. It is precisely that simple and it is also that difficult" (Bennis, 2009).

Abstract: The transformation of teachers into effective leaders commences with profound self-knowledge that advances as they heed their inner voices, take responsibility for who they are, and contemplate their unique life experiences. Teacher-leaders share a collective passion for the promises that education offers and value the space to have an authentic voice in the system. Genuine teacher-leaders know who they are; they identify and employ their signature strengths and recognize and offset their limitations. Furthermore, they are cognizant of what they need, why, and how to express such needs in ways that prompt collaboration and assistance (Bennis, 2009). This chapter is about language teachers taking control over their own wellbeing—both in life circumstances that happen to them as well as in the intentional activities they can initiate to act on their circumstances.

Personal leadership for wellbeing

In a chapter like ours that explores the potential of enhancing teacher wellbeing a pivotal question is whether a variable like happiness (e.g. subjective wellbeing) can actually be enriched. Through research such as that carried out by Lyubomirsky, et. al. (2005), the answers are hopeful that we can indeed consciously and actively alter our overall level of happiness through certain actions and activities. According to their findings, we all have a baseline level of happiness around which we tend to gravitate. This chronic happiness level is dominated by a tripartite of three main elements: an innate genetically pre-determined set point (roughly 50%), circumstantial life factors (roughly 25%), and intentional activities and practices (roughly 25%). Although little can be done to modify the 50% that determines one's happiness set-point (as it is assumed to be comparatively fixed, stable over time, and immune to influence or control), the other two categories, life circumstances and intentional activities, have great potential for purposeful alteration. The life circumstances category consists of happiness-relevant incidental factors that transpire in a teacher's life over which they have limited control, including variables such as occupational status, job security, income, and health. Intentional activities, on the other hand, is an extensive category that comprises a broad range of effortful behaviors that teachers choose to do and think about in their daily lives. In other words, life circumstances happen to teachers and intentional activities are the ways that teachers act on their circumstances (Seligman, 2002). Because of the comparative lack of amenability of one's innate predisposition toward happiness and the more malleable qualities of life circumstances and intentional activities, we will focus the rest of our chapter on: 1) how teachers might consider taking the lead over life circumstances by using an adaptive mental mechanisms model; and 2) how they can

manage their intentional activities to enhance their own wellbeing via using a five-faceted approach called “PERMA”.

Teacher wellbeing is a shared responsibility

Before we begin exploring the initiatives that teacher-leaders employ to expand self-knowledge in pursuit of their own wellbeing, we need to make clear a very important caveat. Although in this chapter we are focusing our attention on teachers, this does not negate the responsibility that school leaders, administrators and institutions in general have in engendering teacher wellbeing (Mercer & Gregersen, 2020). Everyone in the system flourishes when leaders work together with teachers to exert their combined influence to enhance the wellbeing of all educational stakeholders. Educational directors have the obligation to provide the space for teachers to find and transverse their paths toward personal and professional wellbeing and create institutions that nurture it. Teachers cannot do it alone. They need systemic institutional support (including social, cultural, and political) that prioritizes their wellbeing in all of the components of the education system. Although teachers’ personal self-care pathways provide conduits toward personal and professional flourishing, progressive attention at systemic levels, including positive leadership is also essential (Cann, et. al., 2021).

Teacher wellbeing is not a luxury

To begin, the importance of teacher wellbeing cannot be overstated. When teachers are happy and experience wellbeing, students are also positively impacted—via learners’ academic performance and their own levels of happiness (Briner & Dewberry, 2007; Roffey, 2012; Lyubomirsky et al. 2005; Jennings & Greenberg 2009). Indeed, happy teachers beget happy

learners (Bakker, 2005). Additionally, teachers' wellbeing is pivotal in developing and maintaining a positive classroom climate and the enrichment of teacher-student relationships (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Hence, when we make a plea for teacher self-care, the notion of "selfishness" is nonsensical.

Wellbeing is "the presence of positive emotions, a lack of negative emotions and a sense of overall life satisfaction" (Diener, 1984). Notice that wellbeing is NOT the complete eradication of negativity, but rather it is experienced with a higher preponderance of positive in relation to the negative. Negative emotions play an important role in our survival and alert us to issues that need our attention. Fear, for example, increases our adrenaline and sets us into immediate motion—at times in life-saving measures, like rounding up our students and running out of a burning building. Another example, anger, often spurs us to take action that we might not otherwise take, such as in addressing issues of social injustice or classroom bullying. Although the negative has a fundamental place in our emotional repertoires, wellbeing is experienced when positive emotion is felt with greater depth and frequency.

Essentially, there are two categories of wellbeing: eudaemonic and hedonic. Eudaemonic approaches emphasize meaning, personal development and self-realization--aims that require we confront our adversities. In such cases, disagreeable emotions are as vital as the pleasant ones in fathoming life's challenges. Hedonic wellbeing, on the other hand, is concerned with pleasure and enjoyment, doing those things we like and avoiding those we do not. Both forms of wellbeing are important pieces to the wellbeing puzzle (Seligman, 2002).

Teachers taking the lead over life circumstances: mature adaptive mechanisms

Although life circumstances and intentional activities are both susceptible to deliberate change, the first element is more static, which means it is probably more resistant to change. This does not mean, however, that teachers' hands are tied. Within this category we find contextual factors such as the school environment, including institutional leaders who may or may not care about teachers' wellbeing. While teachers may not have control over all circumstantial life factors, they do have choices in how to respond to them. It is in this line of thinking that we turn our attention toward adaptive mental mechanisms. These are observable behaviors we use to adapt to stressful experiences in our lives. They can range from less adaptive, unproductive, involuntary actions like denial, projection or repression to mature defenses that mitigate and direct adverse emotional responses (Beresford, et. al., 2021). Mature adaptive mechanisms are the most productive ways for teachers to take the lead over undesirable circumstances and they are frequently considered analogous with positive coping and wellbeing. In such cases, the circumstances teachers experience are fully perceived without distortion and the need to adapt to them is wholly assumed by the person invoking them (Beresford, et. al., 2021). In continuation, we present seven "mature mental mechanisms" that teachers can summon to manage the circumstances that happen in their lives in ways that result in higher wellbeing. They include affiliation, altruism, anticipation, humor, self-assertion, self-observation, sublimation and suppression (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021).

*Affiliation***.** Teachers who manage life circumstances via affiliation confront emotional adversities by looking to others for assistance or support. Through affiliation, they can express themselves, share difficulties, and feel less isolated. Confiding leads to an increase in coping

capacity because the other person supplies emotional validation and support. Affiliation, however, does not mean conceding the leadership role over their wellbeing and making someone else responsible for dealing with their problems, nor does it imply pressuring someone to help, or feigning helplessness to elicit aid. Through affiliation teachers cope better because they receive support from others while at the same time feel the satisfaction of human relationships (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021). Consider, for example, the language teacher who feels the personal frustration of running out of ideas to help a particularly needy student and who reaches out for advice from a mentor teacher. In doing so, they find an advocate who supports them while also being able to enjoy the collegiality.

Altruism. Altruism, or the dedication to fulfilling the needs of others, is also a means of being a leader in addressing negative life circumstances. Teachers who perform altruistic behaviors feel a degree of gratification either vicariously or from those to whom the altruism was directed. Because altruistic teachers are typically mindful that their own needs or feelings are often the triggers for unselfish actions, they feel direct rewards even while knowing that there may have been overt reasons of self-interest for their altruistic actions (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021). Through lending a hand to a colleague in need, for example, altruistic teachers who are up against their own adverse life circumstances get their social and attachment needs met. By channeling negative emotions such as anger or adverse experiences like powerlessness into socially helpful responses teachers can feel a sense of mastery.

Anticipation. Another mental adaptive mechanism, anticipation, can enhance teachers' wellbeing in two different ways. The first is through a teacher's consideration of realistic, alternative

solutions and anticipating emotional reactions to future problems. Rehearsal allows teachers to formulate a better adaptive response to the anticipated conflict or stressor in a life circumstance and mitigate distressing aspects of it. Anticipation allows them to "master conflict in small steps" (Vaillant, 2000). As a coping mechanism to life circumstances, teachers can lead the charge by transforming their negativity into positivity because they can overcome and conquer their obstacles (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021). For example, consider a language teacher preparing for an upcoming conference who with anticipation, scours the internet for information, puts together a brilliant PowerPoint and plots everything down to the last detail. Although this strategy may be partially fueled by negative worry, such anticipatory behaviors are guaranteeing that the teachers succeeds. The second way anticipation can work is via anticipatory savoring (Bryant & Veroff, 2007), which when employed, can move a teacher from worry to joy. When using optimism to look ahead at future plans, negativity begins to recede and relaxation replaces it with positive thoughts about the future. Teachers who anticipate with healthy optimism rather than constant concern may experience a transformative effect as they look forward to future events with a positive frame of mind. Many teachers anticipate with pleasure their summer breaks!

Humor. Another adaptive mechanism, humor, is one that teachers can use to gain control over life circumstances over which they have limited influence. When using humor, negativity and stressors are dealt with by focusing on their comical or ironic features, which releases the tension surrounding the negative element(s) in a manner that rallies everyone to share in it. With humor, the vexation springing from negative life circumstances, such as misbehaving students, is rapidly released so that both self and others can smile or laugh (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021). For

example, using it as a classroom management technique is often effective. One teacher tells the story of having to combat the mounting challenge of cell phones. He recounted that because most cell phones play music instead of ringing, he would stop what he was doing in the middle of class and dance until the phone was silenced. After the first dancing episode, his students were quick to rebuke each other when a cell phone went off: “Turn it off quickly or he’ll start dancing again!” (Powers, 2005).

Self-assertion. As an adaptive mechanism, self-assertion is evidenced when teachers deal with negative life circumstances by frankly expressing their feelings and thoughts to achieve their goals--not coercively or and manipulatively, but rather through clear communication of the goal or purpose of the self-assertive behavior to all those affected by it. Self-assertion addresses negativity through the direct expression of our feelings and ideas, thus relieving the adverse emotion that occurs whenever internal or external countervailing powers prevent expression. As an adaptive response to life circumstances, self-assertion does not require that teachers who employ it get their way; instead, it permits them to thrive without the negative emotion that festers when feelings and ideas are left unexpressed and without the negativity that could arise for not advocating for oneself in adverse life circumstances (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021). Self-assertion is a teacher-as-leader quality. One of the authors of this chapter was continually annoyed by an insensitive colleague who during department meetings would drone on and on about the same senseless, negative commentaries directed at the chairperson. During one online meeting during the pandemic, s/he wrote in the public chatbox, “Can we move on? I’ve heard this all before.” Immediately, others in the meeting echoed the same sentiments. After two years of the same toxic ramblings, it felt so good to self-assert! …and the behavior stopped.

Self-observation. Employing self-observation to deal with negative life circumstances allows teachers to reflect on their own thoughts, feelings, motivation, and behavior. For instance, in interpersonal interactions they can see themselves as others see them, and consequently they can better understand others' reactions towards them. This adaptive mechanism goes beyond mere self-reflection or talking about themselves because it opens their eyes to a more accurate self-perspective. Although it does not change them per se, it allows teachers to develop and adapt better as they take a leadership role over their life circumstances (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021).

Sublimation. When using sublimation as an adaptive mechanism, teachers can manage negative emotion by channeling it into socially acceptable behavior rather than expressing potentially unprofessional or "unacceptable" feelings or impulses. Sublimation allows teachers to express the feelings and thoughts they believe could have negative repercussions but in more socially accepted forms—whether in the classroom or elsewhere. The outcome of sublimation is that the initial feelings are granted a degree of expression while the resulting activity or product may also bring some positive consequences (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021). A primary example of sublimation occurs during teachers' practice of emotional labor (i.e., suppressing an emotion and instead performing in a way that is aligned with role expectations) (Hochschild, 1983). For instance, as teachers we are conditioned to manage our emotions in the classroom and not to show anger, frustration, or disappointment. They understand that it is part of their role; however, harmful emotional labor can result when they squash their authentic emotions and experience dissonance between what they really feel and what they believe they are permitted to, or 'should', display emotionally. To combat such dissonance, teachers might consider channeling the emotions they conceal into journal writing or another creative outlet. According to Mercer

and Gregersen (2020), the harmful effects of stressful emotional labor can also be mitigated by: 1) identifying and labeling it upon its occurrence; 2) observing and liberating it; 3) forecasting its arousal; and 4) identifying the patterns that precede it.

Suppression. The final adaptive mechanism we address for teachers desirous of taking leadership over life circumstances is suppression or deliberately choosing not to indulge in conscious thought, feeling or action even though they are aware of it. This allows them to focus on other more urgent matters without being distracted by every impulse that arises, and without having to act on those impulses (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021). Teachers often find themselves in situations where they cannot dwell on tangential problems because they must deal with the one pressing issue currently at hand. With suppression, teachers can readily recall the provisionally blocked thoughts and feelings to conscious awareness because they were not forgotten. In other words, when certain life circumstances get in the way of more urgent matters, teachers can postpone them until they feel more able or the timing is better. For example, they may be annoyed about a student's behavior, but because of the presence of other learners and their learning objectives for the class, they decide to control their reaction and bring it up later when they can address the student privately. While the class is in session, they continue teaching, thinking internally, "I need to keep the class moving. Forget about the misbehavior right now, I'll take care of that later." Thus, when teachers suppress, they focus on other areas, manage their feelings, control their actions in the present, and do so consciously. This is helpful because teachers can buy the time they need to take action.

Life circumstances are often out of teachers' control and yet they constitute roughly 25% of their wellbeing. Although they may not have power over their occurrence, they do have the option to take a leadership role in responding to them in ways that enhance their personal and professional wellbeing through employing adaptive mechanisms such as affiliation, altruism, anticipation, humor, self-assertion, self-observation, sublimation and suppression. We now turn our attention to the most conscious element of the happiness tripartite to enhancing teachers' own wellbeing: intentional activities.

Teachers taking the lead over intentional activities: research-based PERMA-related interventions

Arguably the most well researched model of wellbeing is Seligman's (2011) PERMA model whose components include Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment. Fortunately, research-based techniques are available that will increase each element. Because teachers can take the lead by making different choices in order to flourish, the following section explores factors that can aid teachers in taking control of their wellbeing by making more informed choices about intentional activities that reflect their values and interests.

Positive emotion. To increase positive emotion as a means of attaining greater wellbeing, teachers can think about it in terms of taking intentional measures to enhance their pleasure and enjoyment in life—what we described above as "hedonic". Such measures can include those that involve their positive emotion about the past, such as nurturing gratitude and forgiveness; the present, through savoring and mindfulness; or the future via fostering hope and optimism. In

continuation, we provide sample activities teachers may want to pursue, but these are by no means an exhaustive list.

Positive emotion interventions. First, research suggests that writing a "gratitude letter" nurtures positive emotion about past events. This intervention begins by recalling a person who did something for which you are particularly appreciative but have not yet expressed gratitude. Address the person directly without worrying about technical writing issues and describe in detail what they did, why you are grateful and how this has affected your life. This intervention takes on even more meaning if you can meet in-person and read your letter aloud (Peterson, 2006).

Similar to the gratitude letter, a "forgiveness letter" involves recalling a person from the past, but in this case, it is an individual towards whom you are holding resentment or with whom you have been in conflict. Important to note is that forgiving is not forgetting; nor is it excusing or exonerating the wrongdoing. The objective of this intervention is not reconciliation; instead the writing of this letter is something you do for yourself to release toxic negative emotion, limit your transgressor's power to continue their victimization, and to take back control. To begin, write a letter that describes the transgression and the emotions it evoked. Next, pledge to forgive your transgressor but do not send it nor discuss it with the offender, rather, use this intervention to feel the power of forgiveness and recapture your sense of peace (Peterson, 2006).

To kindle positive emotion in the present, teachers might consider the research-based intentional activities of savoring and mindfulness. Bryant and Veroff (2007) define savoring as actively and

consciously attending, appreciating, and enhancing positive experiences that occur in one's life. Too often teachers let positive moments flutter by without truly celebrating them, whether it be a kind word from a student, a small gift from a colleague, or a congratulatory email from an administrator. These might be transitory moments and the positive emotions they engender tend to fade--but they do not necessarily have to. They just have to be savored. To help with savoring, collect all of the positive memorabilia that comes your way and put it in one place and create a "positivity portfolio" (Fredrickson, 2009). This can be electronic or in a physical box. The idea behind this intervention is that at any given time, you can return to the portfolio and savor the original feelings you had when you first received the item. Another form of savoring is a "savoring walk" ((Bryant & Veroff, 2007) which entails setting aside 15 to 20 minutes to take a walk outside by yourself. As you walk, notice as many positive things around you as possible, whether they be sights, sounds, smells, or other sensations. For example, focus on the color of the leaves of a tree never noticed before, the reflection of the sun in a puddle of water, the smell of freshly cut grass or flowers, or the chirping of birds. As you become aware of each of these positive sensorial experiences, acknowledge each, pause for a second to ascertain that it registered, and identify what it was that made it pleasurable. Attempt to vary the route each day so it does not become a routine experience.

Similar to savoring, "mindfulness" helps shift our thoughts away from usual preoccupations toward an appreciation of the moment and a larger perspective on life. The distinction is that savoring happens when a purposeful attempt is made to enrich the positive and prolong a pleasant experience. Mindfulness, on the other hand, is necessary as a conduit to the senses of taste, sight, and smell--and to notice positives in the first place. It incorporates noticing whatever

is vying for attention, be it positive, negative, or neutral. With mindfulness the positive is perceived but openness, curiosity, and receptivity remain in order to discern other features of the present moment. A basic mindfulness meditation exercise could include sitting on a chair or cross-legged on the ground and concentrating on a facet of breathing, such as the feeling of air flowing into the nose and out the mouth, or the stomach expanding and contracting with each inhale and exhale. Once attention is focalized in this way, begin to widen it. Be cognizant of sounds, smells, and sensations. Finally, embrace and deliberate on each thought or sensation without exercising good/bad judgment (Carr, 2019).

In positive psychology, hope is considered a positive, future-oriented emotion. For the layperson, it may conjure ideas of unrealistic, wishful thinking, but in our case, we perceive it as a positive state of mind in which teachers pursue achievable yet challenging goals (Luthans, et. al., 2015). Hope begins with setting explicit goals, pinpointing pathways to success, and mustering the mental energy necessary to attain them (Lopez, et. al., 2000). Increasing hope depends on creating mental targets that drive action sequences that can be exhibited in self-statements like, “I want to find greater work/life balance” or mental images such as imagining yourself with the free time to do the things you have always wanted to do (Rand & Cheavens, 2009). Hope needs pathways that advance teachers from where they are at present to the attainment of the goals they set for themselves. According to Lopez et al., (2000), the creation of a hope pathway begins with splitting long-term goals into smaller, reachable ones and then focusing on the first sub-goal. Then, teachers use mental rehearsal to reflect upon how the next sub-goal will be achieved and employ imagery to envisage how challenges can be overcome. New skills will need to be learned as support networks are cultivated and teachers need to ask for assistance when

required. Building hope pathways is powerful for teachers because through them, they define approaches that focus on goals and their own agency to attain them (Rand & Cheavens, 2009).

Engagement. Through engagement, teachers fully deploy their talents, strengths and concentration in the completion of challenging tasks, often resulting in a state of flow in which teachers feel such gratification that they feel compelled to accomplish the activity for its own sake rather than for some external incentive. In fact, the activity itself is its own reward. Teachers who intentionally take action to experience flow find demanding activities that challenge their skill set. As they pursue an explicit goal, immediate feedback on progress is evident and their attention is completely focused in the moment, their self-awareness vanishes, and time seems to stop (Basom & Frase, 2004). Such complete absorption can be felt in a wide array of activities, from engaging in an engrossing conversation, to being mesmerized by a work task, or reading an engrossing book, among other tasks.

Engagement intervention. Achieving flow is not as simple as merely being immersed in a task. In continuation, we provide five steps for teachers to pursue intentionally to take control over their wellbeing through feeling a deep sense of engagement. First, find a task that taxes your skill but does not overwhelm—if it is too challenging it becomes a stressor; if it is not challenging enough boredom ensues. To achieve a flow state, teachers also need to have unambiguous goals; establishing clear goals provides the means to ascertaining whether success is at hand. Additionally, distractions are flow killers as they cloud the mental clarity needed for complete absorption, so get rid of them. Similarly, multitasking is a myth. The brain only processes one item at a time, so when a teacher takes pride in being an “effective multitasker”, in

reality, they are not performing two jobs simultaneously; instead they are obliging their brain to jump hurriedly between two or more tasks, which strains the cognitive load on the brain even more. Furthermore, flow cannot be forced, so if it is not being felt, let it go and try again tomorrow. The "paradox of control" suggests that the more fixated teachers are at controlling something, the harder it is to control. Finally, enjoyment is a critical element of flow, so engage with something gratifying. Flow state is induced via intrinsic—not extrinsic—motivation, which means teachers want to feel satisfaction not because of a reward but because it just feels good inside (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

Relationships. In simplest terms, advocates of wellbeing say, "Other people matter" (Peterson, 2006). Relationships are fundamental to wellbeing and comprise the wide array of interactions teachers have with students, colleagues, partners, friends, family members, administrators, and their community at large. Intentional acts to take leadership over their own wellbeing are those that nurture effective relationships in which they feel supported, valued and loved. This is because the experiences that promote wellbeing (intense job, profound meaning, heartfelt laughter, deep sense of belonging, and pride in achievement, among others) are frequently intensified through relationships. Sharing good news and celebrating accomplishments cultivates durable bonds and improved relationships (Siedlecki et al., 2014). Additionally, reacting enthusiastically, especially in close or intimate relationships, strengthens intimacy, wellbeing, and satisfaction. Because humans are inherently social creatures (Seligman, 2012), connection with others gives life purpose and meaning. Developing strong bonds is central to adaptation and is empowered by the capacity to love, be compassionate, show kindness, exercise empathy, and build teamwork and cooperation. The yearning to feel connected to others has long been

recognized as a basic human need, and interpersonal relationships significantly impact our mental and physical health, health behavior, and longevity (Umberson & Montez, 2010).

Relationship intervention. Research shows that prioritizing others' needs increases teachers' sense of flourishing, so those who want to take intentional action over their wellbeing may want to consider enhancing their relationships by performing thoughtful actions for someone else. Whether large or small, most teachers perform acts of kindness at one time or another and their beneficiaries may not even be aware of them. Yet their impact can be significant—not only on the recipient but on the teacher as well. To strengthen relationships for enhanced wellbeing, perform five acts of kindness in one day as a way of both promoting kindness in the world and cultivating happiness in yourself and others. More specifically, perform five acts of kindness—all five in one day. It does not matter if the acts are big or small, but research suggests that the intervention is more effective if a variety of acts is performed. The acts need not be for the same person and the person need not even be aware of them. Examples might include leaving a positive post-it note on a colleague's door, donating a new plant to the teachers' lounge, sharing a goodie basket with the class, or any other creative act of kindness you can think of. After each act, write down what you did in at least one or two sentences; for an even greater boost of happiness, also write down how it made you feel. Researchers suggest that this practice increases wellbeing because it heightens awareness of positive social interactions, encourage pro-social attitudes toward others, and builds healthier relationships (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon & Schkade, 2005).

Meaning. A sense of meaning and purpose can be derived from belonging to and serving something bigger than the self. While everyone's definition of what is meaningful and purposeful is different, having a purpose in life helps teachers focus on what is really important in the face of significant challenge or adversity. Although enjoyment might bring positive emotion to one's life, to nurture deeper enduring happiness, teachers need to explore the realm of meaning. To take intentional action toward a meaningful life, teachers might want to consider using their unique personal (signature) strengths and developing their virtues in service of something bigger than themselves (Seligman, 2002).

Meaning intervention. Sometimes teachers give their weaknesses and limitations more attention than their strengths. Yet research suggests that thinking about personal strengths can boost their wellbeing and increase their sense of meaning and purpose in life. This intervention begins by identifying personal strengths (the positive traits that contribute to your character, such as kindness or perseverance) and reflecting upon how they could be used in new and different ways. To do this, go to www.via.org and take the ten-minute survey. Upon completion, a list of 24 virtues in order ranked by the survey responses will be provided. With list in hand, take a moment to think about one of the top personal strengths—for instance, love, creativity, kindness, forgiveness, or curiosity. Consider how this strength could be used in a novel way. For example, if the personal strength of perseverance is revealed, compile a list of tasks that has been challenging to complete and then try to address each item. Or if curiosity is chosen, attempt an activity never undertaken before. Write down the personal strength you plan to use and how you are going to use it. Then, act on your strength as frequently as possible throughout the day. Repeat these steps every day for a week, either using the same personal strength across multiple

days, or trying a new personal strength each day. At the end of the week, write about the personal strengths that were focused upon and how they were used. Write in detail about what you did, how you felt, and whether using your signature strengths in novel ways increased your sense of meaning and purpose in life (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005).

Accomplishment. Teachers often pursue achievement, competence, success and mastery for their own sake, in a variety of domains, including the classroom, home life, and professional development, among others. The lists are endless and lamentably often ill-defined. Some goals are big, others are small; some are easily attainable, others are difficult; some are safe, while others are bold. Many pursue accomplishments even when they do not necessarily lead to positive emotion, meaning or relationships. Feelings of accomplishment are a consequence of striving toward and attaining goals, mastering an undertaking, and maintaining the self-motivation necessary to finish what was started. Teachers' wellbeing is enhanced through such feelings because they can look at their lives with a sense of pride (Seligman, 2012). Accomplishment needs perseverance and passion to attain goals; however teachers' wellbeing is compounded when accomplishment is linked to internally motivated endeavors (Duckworth & Quinn, 2018). Achieving intrinsic goals, such as personal growth and connection with others results in larger wellbeing gains than external goals such as a higher salary or a promotion (Seligman, 2013).

Although many types of goals exist, they ultimately have one thing in common: change. Goals move teachers from where they are presently to where they want to be. Goal setting is broadly recognized as an operative means of focusing attention on the most appropriate activities,

generating energy, and fostering commitment. It not only helps teachers complete the task, but also impacts wellbeing, represents their dedication to achieve personal change, and enhances meaning and purpose in life (Sheard, 2013). However, the goal must be well articulated, employ suitable strategies, and be action-directed, or it will be devoid of resolve, relevance, route, and responsibility (Ogbeiwi, 2017).

Accomplishment intervention. Goals are most effective when well-formulated frameworks are used that provide a logical, reliable platform to plan and monitor their completion. According to Ryan and Deci (2018), we all have a set of innate psychological needs, one of which is to add meaning to life, so as teachers reflect upon the goals they would like to pursue, they must ask themselves whether each goal aligns with their overall life goals, and as goals are refined, a determination must be made that the goals continue to reflect the values and ideals of a meaningful life. The first question teachers need to ask concerns what kind of goals do they want to attain. Are they seeking an outcome goal (e.g., "I want to be the best at using technology in my school"); a performance goal (e.g., "I want to be better at providing learners with immediate feedback"); a process goal (e.g., "I want to practice doing yoga after school to increase my wellbeing"): or a delivery-focused goal ("I want to deliver change, such as in the methods I use to teach")? Also, the goals teachers set need to be meaningful and challenging, provoke change, and sometimes even make them uncomfortable. To define exigent goals and to help overcome built-in resistance, several steps are necessary. Teacher first need to recognize the worth of stepping outside their comfort zone and admit that comfort often stifles growth. Second, teachers need to embrace the opportunity to challenge themselves, which may necessitate a mindset adjustment. Third, discomfort may cause distress--recognize it, own the negative emotions that

might surface, and ascertain whether the rewards compensate for the discomfort. Lastly, make an effort to avoid overthinking in order to circumvent being hindered by analysis paralysis and take action even if the end goal remains a bit vague (Hyatt, 2019).

In continuation, we provide two models to inspire teachers to find what they want to achieve, why, and how they are going to do it. To orient teachers' goal setting, we have chosen to highlight the steps in both the GROW model (Whitmore, 1996) and SMARTER goals (Falecki et al., 2018).

The GROW model (Goals, Reality, Options, and Way Forward) (Whitmore, 1996) helps teachers establish where they want to be, where they want to go and how they will arrive there. The first step is to establish the goal's current reality by reflecting on its present status, the challenges and concerns that are present and the distance one must transverse to attain the goal. In terms of options that teachers have, they need to consider how to overcome obstacles and how to actually arrive at where they want to be. Finally, the way forward needs to be defined by converting options into actions.

The SMARTER approach for goal-setting incorporates aims that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time bound, exciting, and revisable. Teachers desirous of using this approach will compare each of their goals to the six criteria of the acronym. *Specificity* means the goal needs clarity and conciseness. *Measurability* defines what success looks like and how it is determined. *Achievability* encompasses the notion that the goal is challenging yet possible. *Relevancy* points to the goal's alignment with a teacher's overall life values and aims. Being

time-bound means the goal has a schedule for completion. *Exciting* means it engages and is worthwhile enough to remain committed. Finally, because circumstances change, goals must be open to *revision* if necessary.

Conclusion

Napolean Bonaparte once said, "A leader is a dealer in hope." In this chapter, we have explored teachers-as-leaders in their pursuit of hope-driven pathways to wellbeing—how they can take control over their own wellbeing, both in responding to life circumstances over whose advent they have limited control as well as in freely taking intentional actions to purposefully create positivity in their daily lives. Mature adaptive mechanisms such as affiliation, altruism, anticipation, humor, self-assertion, self-observation, sublimation and suppression provide a means by which teachers can confront the relatively stable situational circumstances that occur in their lives through responding positively. Teachers also have the option to invoke purposeful actions to enhance their wellbeing through positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Such activities are completely within their control and provide a preventative backdrop of positivity that, like a bank account, can store their moments of flourishing in their resiliency account to tap into during those adverse moments when they need to counter-balance the negativity that sometimes arises.

References

Basom, M. R., & Frase, L. (2004). Creating optimal work environments: Exploring teacher flow experiences. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, *12*(2), 241-258.

Bennis, W. G., & Townsend, R. (1989). *On becoming a leader* (Vol. 36). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Bennis, W. G. (2009). *On becoming a leader*. Basic Books.

Beresford, T., Wahlberg, L., Hipp, D., & Ronan, P. J. (2021). Psychological Adaptive Mechanism Maturity Predicts Good Outcomes in Treatment for Refractory PTSD. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 3721.

Briner, R., & Dewberry, C. (2007). Staff well-being is key to school success. *London: Worklife Support Ltd/Hamilton House*.

Bryant, F. B., & Veroff, J. (2007). Savoring: A new model of positive experience. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Cann, R. F., Riedel-Prabhakar, R., & Powell, D. (2021). A model of positive school leadership to improve teacher wellbeing. *International Journal of Applied Positive Psychology*, *6*(2), 195-218.

Carr, A. (2019). *Positive psychology and you: a self-development guide*. Routledge.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996). Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention. New York: HarperCollins.

Di Giuseppe, M., & Perry, J. C. (2021). The hierarchy of defense mechanisms: assessing defensive functioning with the defense mechanisms rating scales Q-sort. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*.

Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-being. *Psychological bulletin*, *95*(3), 542.

Duckworth, A. L., Quinn, P. D., & Seligman, M. E. (2009). Positive predictors of teacher effectiveness. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *4*(6), 540-547.

Fredrickson, B. (2009). *Positivity: Groundbreaking research reveals how to embrace the hidden strength of positive emotions, overcome negativity, and thrive*. Crown Publishers/Random House.

Hochschild, A. (1983). Comment on Kemper's" Social Constructionist and Positivist Approaches to the Sociology of Emotions". *American Journal of Sociology*, *89*(2), 432-434.

Hyatt, M. (2019). *Your Best Year Ever*, Christianaudio publishers.

Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. *Review of educational research*, *79*(1), 491-525.

Luthans, F., Youssef, C. M., & Avolio, B. J. (2007). Psychological capital: Developing the human competitive edge. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Lopez, S. J., Floyd, R. K., Ulven, J. C., & Snyder, C. R. (2000). Hope therapy: Helping clients build a house of hope. In *Handbook of hope* (pp. 123-150). Academic Press.

Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of general psychology*, *9*(2), 111-131.

Mercer, S. & Gregersen, T. (2020). *Teacher Wellbeing*. Oxford.

Ogbeiwi, O. (2017). Why written objectives need to be really SMART. *British Journal of Healthcare Management*, *23*(7), 324-336.

Peterson, C. (2006). *A primer in positive psychology*. Oxford university press.

Powers, T. (2005). Engaging Students With Humor. *Association for Psychological Science*, https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/engaging-students-with-humor

Rand, K. L., & Cheavens, J. S. (2009). Hope theory. *Oxford handbook of positive psychology*, *2*, 323-333.

Roffey, S. (2012). Pupil wellbeing—Teacher wellbeing: Two sides of the same coin?. *Educational and child psychology*, *29*(4), 8.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2019). Brick by brick: The origins, development, and future of self-determination theory. In *Advances in motivation science* (Vol. 6, pp. 111-156). Elsevier.

Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. New York: Free Press.

Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish*. Simon & Schuster.

Seligman, M. E. (2012). *Positive psychology in practice*. John Wiley & Sons.

Seligman, M. E., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist, 60*(5), 410-421.

Sheard, M. (2012). *Mental toughness: The mindset behind sporting achievement*. Routledge.

Siedlecki, K. L., Salthouse, T. A., Oishi, S., & Jeswani, S. (2014). The relationship between social support and subjective well-being across age. *Social indicators research*, *117*, 561-576.

Umberson, D., & Karas Montez, J. (2010). Social relationships and health: A flashpoint for health policy. *Journal of health and social behavior*, *51*(1_suppl), S54-S66.

Vaillant, G. E. (2000). Adaptive mental mechanisms: Their role in a positive psychology. *American psychologist*, *55*(1), 89.

Whitmore, J. (2009) *Coaching for Performance: Growing Human Potential and Purpose—The Principles and Practice of Coaching and Leadership. 4th Edition*, Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Reflection questions

1. What have you noticed about the ways you maintain your own wellbeing in the workplace?
2. Which of the 'mature adaptive mechanisms' do you employ? Which ones have you not yet tried out?
3. How could you encourage your colleagues and more broadly your workplace to integrate (the development of) such mechanisms into daily practice?