

ENHANCING HOLISTIC TEACHER WELLBEING

(An Eight-week Mentorship Programme for Novice Teachers)

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PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Introduction

The concept of holistic wellbeing refers to a state of complete health in relation to one's physical, psychological, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, social, vocational, financial and environmental wellbeing. Holistic or overall wellness is not only defined in terms of physical health and entails much more than having frequent "me-time" or regular spa days and it is much more than the obvious euphoric state of your body being free from disease and being sound of mind. Among the most essential components in achieving holistic wellbeing are those that relate to how we successfully foster and maintain relationships, the ability to be financially savvy, the awareness of and stepping into your passion and purpose; being able to set your own boundaries and respect of others'; knowing our worth; taking care and ownership of our spiritual and intellectual wellbeing, our ability to sympathise and empathise with others and creating safe and clean spaces and the preservation of our natural resources, not only for our own pleasure and survival but for those coming after us. We therefore only get closer to reaching holistic wellbeing, if at some point in our lives, these aspects are in balance.

Findings from a focused study, conducted in public schools in the Western Cape, reveals that teachers face a multitude of challenges on a daily basis. This often leads to low morale, despondency, feelings of inadequacy and not being appreciated, acknowledged and valued as professionals. As a result of this, high levels of psychological distress, burn-out, low morale, depression and lifestyle diseases are highly prevalent among teachers, which often lead to premature retirement and a mass exodus of newly qualified teachers. Based on these startling findings, it became evident and very necessary that support and

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the enhancement of the holistic wellbeing of teachers be prioritised (Esau, 2017).

In response to this, EduFocus Projects has developed a multi-dimensional, eight-week hybrid mentorship programme, based on the eight most salient dimensions of wellbeing (physical, emotional, social, intellectual, environmental, spiritual, vocational and financial). This is a deliberate attempt to equip teaching professionals with practical tools to work towards the enhancement of their holistic wellbeing. In addition to this, we have acknowledged that the level of the desired support would additionally, be better achieved, through a highly specialised interdisciplinary intervention approach, which is based on sound research principles and findings. Our 8-week programme has therefore been designed to take you through a journey of self-reflection, discovery, the learning of vital skills as well as the unlearning of certain habits which no longer serve and enhance your holistic wellbeing.

The rationale behind an eight- week mentorship programme to enhance your holistic wellbeing?

The World Health Organisation (WHO 2017) estimates that globally, the number of people with depression exceeds 300 million, with a similar number affected by a range of anxiety disorders. South Africa has limited data detailing the prevalence of mental illness in the workplace, but there is evidence that the teaching profession, among others, have high rates of psychological distress and burn-out (Esau 2017).

Depression is ranked as the single largest contributor to global disability. In South Africa as many as 30% of people will develop clinically significant symptoms of a common mental illness during

their lifetime (Bantjes 2017). Otten (2016) reports that teachers in the Western Cape are on average absent for 19 days of the year - the highest rate in the Southern African Development community. This is not surprising, as teaching has become such a substantially stressful profession with unrealistically high demands, constant curriculum changes, challenging under-resourced working conditions, inadequate support and they often feel left out of important decisions around them and their work. Therefore, while conceptualising this mentorship programme, we were well aware that it is an investment, geared at empowering individuals in all dimensions of life and can also be understood in terms of contributing to the human capital as a tool to expand the teaching and learning capacity of the education sector as a whole.

How our programme benefits the novice teacher

With this programme we are hoping that as you shift your focus and attention to a journey of becoming holistically well, and as you begin to delve deeper, you will begin to recognise and identify the triggers to your high stress levels, low morale and anxiety. Instead of merely complaining about it or trying to reduce the symptoms thereof on a superficial level, you will now be able to engage in a process of solving the main cause of what makes you feel unwell, unappreciated and unfulfilled.

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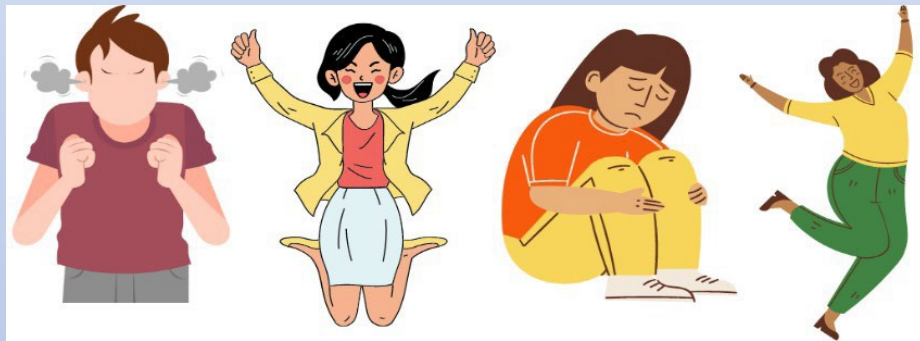
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What exactly does the Eight Dimensions of Wellness entail?

We draw our inferences from the work of Dunn (1961) and Swarbrick and Yudof (2015). Learning more about the full spectrum of our wellbeing, develops a sense of acknowledgment and awareness of our general level of wellbeing. "Knowledge is [indeed] power!" as it takes us a step closer to overall wellness. In the next few pages, we provide a brief description of each of the eight dimensions in alphabetical order:

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING



Emotional wellbeing relates to how well you understand and are able to express your feelings and your ability to develop mechanisms to cope effectively with stress and other issues relating to daily living (Swarbrick & Yudof 2015). It also entails aspects such as self-awareness, self-care, leisure, rest, stress reduction, and acquiring self-reflection skills to aid personal growth and development.

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ENVIRONMENTAL WELLBEING



Environmental wellbeing enables us to create a lifestyle that is pleasant, clean and safe spaces for ourselves and those around us, to live in harmony with nature and create awareness of environmental issues, which ultimately will ensure sustainability of our planet for future generations (Swarbrick & Yudof 2015).

FINANCIAL WELLBEING



Financial wellbeing involves learning how to successfully manage our financial affairs and the unlearning of unhealthy habits that will ensure financial stability and astute financial stewardship. Financial restraints often have a negative impact on our mental, physical and relational health and is found to be one of the main stressors that often leads to anxiety and depression (Swarbrick & Yudof 2015).

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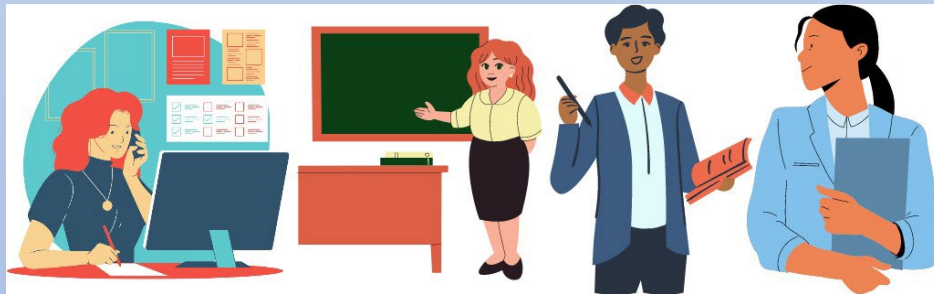
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INTELLECTUAL WELLBEING



Intellectual wellbeing involves being open-minded about change and expanding existing skills and knowledge which enable us to apply logic, understanding and critical analyses to various concepts and situations (Swarbrick & Yudof 2015). It encourages active participation in academic studies as well as in cultural, and community activities.

OCCUPATIONAL WELLBEING



Scientific evidence exists to support the assertion that we spend one third of our lives at work. It is therefore important to understand the importance of occupational or vocational wellbeing. Occupational wellbeing is not just about enjoying your job, getting a pat on the back or

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receiving an annual bonus for work well done. Instead, it is the ability to find passion and fulfilment through your work and to celebrate and acknowledge your own contributions to society and the economy (Swarbrick & Yudof 2015). This dimension of wellbeing is important, as it contributes to personal achievement and enrichment in one's life through the way we make a living.

PHYSICAL WELLBEING



Being physically well means that you realise the importance of being physically active, seeking medical care when needed and leading an overall healthy lifestyle (Swarbrick & Yudof 2015). A healthy lifestyle can be achieved through being active/working out, eating well, getting enough sleep and paying attention to your body when it signals that you either need rest or professional help.

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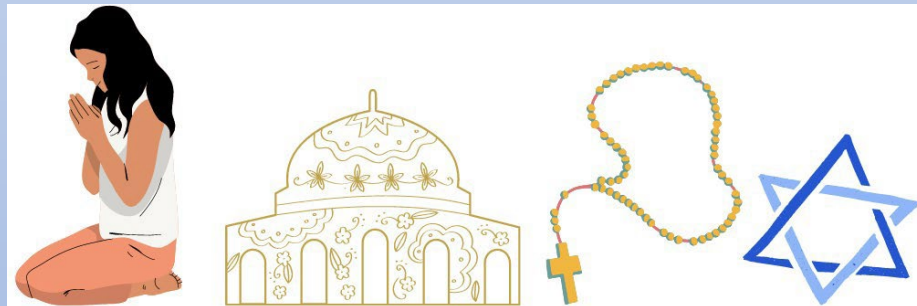
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SOCIAL WELLBEING



Social wellbeing is the ability to effectively engage in activities, conversations and social roles to meaningfully connect with people in various social settings (Swarbrick & Yudof 2015). This dimension does not only allow you to develop meaningful relationships, but it also assists you in developing a sense of belonging and being able to create an ecosystem of support around your circle of influence.

SPIRITUAL WELLBEING



Spiritual wellbeing allows you to be aware of your purpose in life and helps you to develop a set of values in your search for meaning and purpose (Swarbrick & Yudof 2015). A person who is spiritually sound is able to circumnavigate

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and cope more seamlessly with everyday challenges, as they have developed a spiritual foundation as a fallback in troubled times. We live in a diverse society where spirituality can be represented in many ways, hence tolerance, patience and respect for the beliefs of others, are crucial elements of spiritual maturity.

The inter-relatedness of the Eight Dimensions of Wellbeing

The interrelatedness of the eight dimensions of wellbeing can briefly be explained by means of the example of someone experiencing the loss of a loved one, either through death or separation: *the person goes into a period of mourning... her heart is heavy, she is questioning the existence of God and the meaning of life... she has lost her passion for life... she does not see the sense in taking care of her physical health, she is sleep deprived, she avoids talking to people, she cannot get herself to get out of bed to go and work... her workload is piling up, she does not see the sense in cleaning the spaces around her... no measure of retail therapy or any amount of money can ease the pain inside of her and nothing makes sense to her anymore.*

This is sadly the reality many people find themselves in: if you are not psychologically, spiritually or emotionally in a good space, you struggle to see the positive side of life and little else, as the loss and unhappiness constantly occupy your mind. BUT this does not have to be the case as help is fortunately at hand. The appropriate type of intervention by professionals and experts in the field can literally mean the difference between choosing light over darkness and life over death!

How our programme works

Before starting your eight-week journey towards wellness, the first step is to ascertain your current level of wellness through careful evaluation and self-reflection. This course relies greatly on the interventions, knowledge and expertise of specialists in the various dimensions of wellness, who will be presenting the various sessions.

The 8-week course will be offered to you FREE OF CHARGE!!! You will enter into a mentorship agreement with EDUFOCUS PROJECTS and this will entail the following:

- We will host eight (8) one-hour sessions/conversations, focusing on a different dimension or group of dimensions each week on Zoom and the recordings will be made available to all participants.
- Before and after the eight-programme, you will be asked to complete this short self-assessment form:
[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScDJ6qCwgBN1l7iGVLQIXc9GHaf3DFZ2fOz-EUX4F7ng1hM7Q/viewform?usp=sf link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScDJ6qCwgBN1l7iGVLQIXc9GHaf3DFZ2fOz-EUX4F7ng1hM7Q/viewform?usp=sf_link) which you have to return to us at your earliest convenience. Your responses will enable us to guide and assist you better on your way in enhancing your holistic wellbeing.
- With your permission, we will then refer you to one of our specialists who is an expert in the field of whichever dimension(s) of wellness you would like to be supported in.
- During the course of the 8-week programme, we will allow for interventions after which a final evaluation and assessment of the programme will take place.

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OUR COMMITMENT

At EduFocus Projects, we are committed to walk a path with our novice teachers and to honour our mutual mentorship agreement until such a time that the teacher feels that they have received adequate support and guidance.



Thank you

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