



Fall Wellness for School Staff

School's back in session. But wellness shouldn't take a back seat!

The beginning of a new school year is full of ups and downs. Emotions are swirling as everyone adjusts to new routines, responsibilities and relationships. And as you dedicate yourself to the needs of students, it's easy to neglect your own needs.

That's why the Stay Well program put this packet together: to help you prioritize your own mental wellness as the school year unfolds. Scroll down to discover:

- A fall outdoor challenge as a mindfulness practice for reconnecting with nature.
- Tips for beginning a community of practice and/or building wellness connections into your week.
- Wellness Bingo, an activity aimed toward building connections with a focus on wellness.
- A fall calendar packed with tips and suggestions for taking care of yourself as the new school year unfolds.
- A ready-made journal with prompts to ponder and space to write, sketch, brainstorm and unload thoughts and feelings about your work so far.

We hope this packet helps you RECONNECT, REGROUP and RECALIBRATE. Whether you're a teacher, administrator, school nurse, counselor, bus driver or part of the cleaning crew, you play a vital role in the development of Michigan's students.



For additional wellness information and resources, please visit the Stay Well website www.michigan.gov/staywell, and especially the **Resources for Schools** page! Keep an eye out for workshops and other supportive programs for school staff.

Outdoor Fall Challenge

Instructions:

- Gather in groups of two or more.
- Set a time limit for the challenge.
- Take a photo of each item on the list that you find. Each item should be marked as "completed" or left unchecked if it couldn't be found during the given time limit.
- The winners are the team members that find the most items within the given time frame.

- A smooth round stone.
- A feather from a bird.
- Something smaller than your fingernail.
- Something that is orange or brown.
- A pine cone.
- An acorn.
- Something green.
- A unique-shaped leaf.
- Tree bark with an interesting texture.
- An animal (from a safe distance).
- A piece of grass longer than your hand.
- A bug or insect.
- Something shaped like an animal (use your imagination!).
- A pine needle.
- A tree with heart-shaped leaves.
- An interesting rock.
- Animal tracks.
- A seed.
- A sign.
- A photo of your group at the end of the hunt.



Community of Practice

What is a Community of Practice (CoP)?

"A community of practice is a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly."

-Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner, 2015

Where do we start?

1. Identify desired shared interest(s) and goal(s).

- This could be done through surveys, at staff meetings, or as part of continuing education for specific-education groups.
- One example of a goal could be to increase awareness of trauma and apply it to classroom practices.

2. Invite individuals to participate.

- Ideally, this is a voluntary activity but use of CoP groups may enhance workplace wellness and performance, so it is a good idea to allow CoP groups to meet during work hours, when possible.

3. As a group, identify CoP norms and expectations.

- For example: there may be a "point-person" but everyone is helping to lead the group by taking turns to present information.

4. Create systems to give and receive feedback.

- For example, providing an exit ticket to identify whether specific goals were met and share suggestions for future meetings.

5. Create a collective plan for implementation.

- For example: When will gatherings be held? What will you be doing during that time? What space will be used? Creating a shared calendar of meeting dates and topics and/or activities is recommended.

Wellness Connections

What is a Wellness Connection?

A Wellness Connection is intentionally planned time with colleagues to check-in and spend time with one other. This time can be spent “catching-up”, talking about recent challenges and successes, or engaging in a wellness-based activity.

Where do we start?

1. Schedule a time to meet with a colleague.

- Self-select someone you would like to connect with and reach out to them to see if this is something they would also like to participate in.
- Pairing may also be pre-determined as a group and participants may rotate on regular basis.

2. Determine how you two would like to spend this designated time.

- Take a look at each list below for a few ideas to get started or create your own!

Activity ideas:

- Spend some time outdoors.
- Plan an intentional lunch.
- Coordinate a game day.
- Send a motivational quote or an uplifting podcast via text or email.
- Practice a guided meditation.

Discussion topics:

- What has went really well recently?
- Are there ways that you would like some extra support?
- What has helped you get through tough days/times?
- What have you been reading/ watching lately?
- In what ways to you like to receive acknowledgement/care ?

Wellness *bingo*

Find someone that meets each of the following criteria. The first to complete the grid, is the winner!

Listens to guided meditations.



Spends time with a pet(s).



Always has a water bottle close by.



Recites a daily affirmation/mantra.



Participates in a team activity, group or club.



Regularly spends time outdoors.



Practices daily stretching/Yoga.



Tends to a garden.



Has a favorite wellness-based podcast or app.



How to use the calendar:

This Fall Wellness calendar was created to be a tool for daily, weekly, and monthly wellness. Each week is framed by the theme for the month: Reconnect, Regroup, Recalibrate. Each weekday provides prompts for self-care and wellness micro-practices, which are small, manageable, and easy to incorporate into busy personal and professional lives. Additional features of this calendar include:

- 1) A scavenger hunt option. Each week includes a “Find” prompt that can double as an activity for teams to enhance wellness programming or provide friendly competition around the topic of wellness at work. One suggestion for how to use this feature is to invite staff to complete the objective, document it, share it out, and then have their name entered into a drawing for a reward. Our hope is that this is can be a source of fun and accomplishment, as wellness can often be a source of disappointment and frustration for busy educators.
- 2) Particular focus on creating prompts that can be incorporated into a busy educator’s workday. For example, if you want to include wellness into your day but struggle to find free moments, you will find that most of the entries can be embedded into classroom lessons, brain breaks, or even circle time discussions. If you’re on-the-go or travel throughout the day between buildings, many of the prompts are quick reads or videos that can be listened to while on the move.
- 3) Journal prompts to engage reflection, planning, and discussion. This packet includes four prompts for each month and the PDF version of this packet is pre-formatted with fillable text field. While the journal and calendar were designed to go hand-in-hand, we encourage you to use either or both as you prefer.

Reconnect

Wellness Tips for October, 2023

| MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | Notes |
|---|--|---|--|--|-------|
| 2 Reconnect with classroom expectations for kindness today. | 3 Find one person to share good news with. | 4 Start the day with Bear Breathing . | 5 Start today with a Pep Talk from Kid President. | 6 Reflect on one success this week. | |
| 9 Reconnect with yourself each day this week through self-affirmations . | 10 Find inspiration in the "Pain and Joy of Teaching" by Trevor Muir.. | 11 Slow down for a bit by Taking A Pause today | 12 Spend five minutes appreciating one of your abilities. | 13 Draw a smile on the back of your hand. Use it as a reminder to smile more today. | |
| 16 Reconnect with your inner first year teacher. | 17 Find time today to practice chair-yoga poses. | 18 Watch Cultivating Joy: Episode 1 | 19 Enjoy a social media pause today. | 20 Practice Mindful Eating during snack time today. | |
| 23 Reconnect with nature by going outside each day this week. | 24 Find a moment to practice Taking A Pause today. | 25 Share gratitude with one person today. | 26 Walk mindfully into work today. | 27 Practice square breathing today. | |
| 30 Reconnect with self-care by starting this Self-Care Inventory tool | 31 Find a new song that invigorates you. | | | | |

Who are some of the colleagues that have been instrumental to your success so far this year? How have they been present for you? What actions or words have they shared?

How do you want to contribute to the success and well-being of others this school year? List specific actions, qualities and activities that represent who you want to be at work.

As you reconnect with colleagues and students, what are you doing to maintain healthy boundaries? It may be helpful to simply list when and where you are willing to say "no" or list ways you will preserve personal and family boundaries.

How are you settling back into a school-day routine? What do you need to work on to maintain balance throughout each day and week?



Regroup

Wellness Tips for November, 2023

| MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | Notes |
|---|--|--|--|--|-------|
| | | 1 Try some brain teasers . | 2 Practice chair yoga today. | 3 Sit outside and watch the clouds at recess. | |
| 6 Regroup this week by updating your finances or budget. | 7 Find inspiration with this video honoring teachers: Because of a Teacher | 8 Pick a mantra to encourage today. | 9 Write someone a note of appreciation today. | 10 Practice crab breaths today | |
| 13 Regroup by working on your Self-Care plan | 14 Find self-compassion today | 15 Watch Cultivating Joy: Episode 2 | 16 Share a treat or snack with someone today. | 17 Jump start a new exercise routine. | |
| 20 Regroup this week by creating a meal plan. | 21 Find something mundane to appreciate today. | 22 Watch Cultivating Joy: Episode 3 | 23 Notice your breath today. | 24 Walk mindfully into work today. | |
| 27 Regroup this week by starting each day with solitude. | 28 Find inspiration today with this video . | 29 Consider a new brain break activity. | 30 Watch Cultivating Joy: Episode 4 | | |

List some things you can do to regroup during stressful or challenging times of your work day.

Consider the phrase "I can't control the waves, but I can learn to surf." What does it mean for you as someone working in schools? How can this mantra help you to be more resilient during stressful times.

Make a list of go-to strategies for grounding yourself during moments of big emotions and stress. Pick one to practice each day for the next week.

Often during difficult times, we become overly focused on what's not working and what we don't have. Use this moment to meditate on the good and the promising things about your work.

Recalibrate

Wellness Tips for December, 2023

| MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | Notes |
|--|---|---|---|---|-------|
| | | | | 1 | |
| | | | | Sing along to or create a song like this: " May I Be Happy ". | |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | |
| Recalibrate Creating Your Calm in the classroom. | Find a way to destress with this melting exercise . | Watch Cultivating Joy: Episode 5 | Get inspired by this short clip from Simon Sinek | Practice 5-senses grounding with Mascot Mindfulness . | |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | |
| Recalibrate your social media and screen time priorities. | Find one person to praise today. | Practice square breathing today. | Practice five-finger breathing as a coping skill for school stress. | Spend a few minutes sharing gratitude with students. | |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | |
| Recalibrate your self-care approach with this Self-Care inventory and tool . | Find some Monday Motivators for 2024. | Make, bake, create. Do something to free your mind today. | Watch Trevor Muir's short video on the 20% rule for burnout. | Try digital fasting today. | |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | |
| Recalibrate your "why" as an educator for 2024. | Find inspiration with this video about reframing behavior. | Enjoy an extended period of solitude today. | Spend time in guided imagery today . | Watch Cultivating Joy: Episode 6 | |

Identify one professional goal you want to prioritize in the coming year and outline steps to that goal, such as a timeline, individuals to contact, and information to gather.

Reflect on a notable success at work this year. What worked and what did not work for you?

Consider this 8 dimensions of wellness document. How can you use multidimensional wellness as a foundation for balance in the coming year?

Reflect on why you chose to become an educator. Then write about how your original motivation can help you recalibrate your teaching style.