

Supporting Faculty and Staff Resilience and Emotional Well-being

One of a leader's most important jobs this year? Taking care of your people! Having resilient and healthy faculty and staff leads to stronger schools and more learning and, ultimately, makes a leader's job easier. At Folio we've been diving deep into [articles](#), [books](#), and conversations with leaders in our school support check-in calls and [Mastermind groups](#). See below for some tips and a handy checklist of ways to help your teachers with their emotional well-being and resilience.

Supporting Faculty and Staff Resilience and Emotional Well-being

- 1** **Everyone's in a different place** - find out where they are: Some teachers are overwhelmed, consumed by anxiety or circumstances. Others are buoyant and looking to take on challenges. Neither is good or bad. Look for opportunities to check in, both "lightly" -- using the [Mindful Minute](#) -- and more deeply, with 1-1 conversations. Remember that logging conversation notes in myFolio doesn't need to be only for goals and growth; keep track of your "How are you doing, really?" conversations with a quick conversation note.
- 2** **Celebrate lots of little wins:** Especially in times of crisis, the human brain is biased towards the negative, seeing criticism and failure everywhere. Shift the balance! It's not toxic positivity if you're acknowledging specific wins, successes, and hard-fought progress. As leaders at one of our member schools like to say, when you see something good happening, "Spotlight the \$#!% of out that!" Use the [Community Feed](#), too, to highlight best practices and victories that might benefit from a public call-out.
- 3** **Insist on imperfection:** Most teachers in our schools are perfectionists, and are struggling right now because perfection is even more impossible than usual. Identify specific things you would like them to stop doing, in the name of moving away from perfection and towards sustainability. Decree -- don't suggest -- that they make those specific changes and draw boundaries to safeguard their health and well-being.
- 4** **Use reflection and conversation to craft balanced and positive narratives.** Resilient people tend to be better than others at separating the things they can control and change from the things they can't. Structured reflection and coaching conversations are a key way to get there. It's important to name the trauma and "yuck"; it's even more important to quickly move on and build a forward thinking, positive narrative. Help your teams do this in every conversation, from 1-1's to faculty/staff meetings.
- 5** **Help them shift from big problems to actionable goals and steps.** In times of crisis, our brains shut down in the face of big problems but engage actively with small, doable tasks. Creating goals -- a core survival strategy for resilient people -- helps us draw that line between things we can control and things we can't, things to prioritize and things to let go of. Help faculty and staff craft meaningful goals and turn them into action items that are within their sphere of influence. Each time we check off an action item, the brain gives a little boost of neurochemicals that help us feel more positive and empowered.
- 6** **Proactively model care from the top down:** When a leader demonstrates care, even in the face of overwhelm and stress, the modeling impact on the organization is tremendous. Slow down, clear your calendar, and take on the pastoral role. Listen, make eye contact, ask questions about how people are doing and what you can do to help. Don't accept "I'm fine" or "I'm too busy to meet": impose yourself as needed to ensure that no one is struggling alone.
- 7** **Make it about mission and purpose:** The most resilient people find themselves activated and motivated by purpose and something bigger. That's a good fit for educators, who often went into this profession and joined a certain school, because of their connection to mission and purpose. Remind people in explicit and symbolic ways of why we do what we do.
- 8** **Bring fun and build community:** In times like this, we need each other, and we need some play. Create structures and opportunities for connection and fun. Even if you're not the silly type, find a way to add some joy, zaniness, and play into meetings and communications - the benefits of these kinds of moments cannot be understated.



Leadership Checklist for Well-Being

Try these three simple things each day to build resilience and emotional well-being among your faculty and staff

< December



Monday

- Craft a message or a [Loom](#) video with a message for faculty and staff for the week. Send by email and post to the Community Feed. Acknowledge the hard stuff, share an anecdote reminding them of the purpose and value in the work, and do something silly - a costume, a bad joke, etc.

It's Monday! Be a little vulnerable, a little grumpy, and a little more candid than you usually are about how crappy it is to be an educator and a school leader in a pandemic. You're going to balance it out the rest of the week helping people see things in a more positive light.

Tuesday

- Make contact with a faculty or staff member you're worried about. In person, on the phone, or via zoom, force the conversation: "How are you doing, and what can I do to support you?"

Make a list of three faculty or staff who are stretched too thin. Pick one of those people and identify something they might stop doing, hand off to someone else, or cut back on, in the name of sustainability. Then share your idea with them.

Wednesday

- Organize something social or silly - a virtual lunch-table with no work-talk allowed, a game, a dance-off, or an icebreaker. Here are some ideas!

Make contact with a faculty or staff member you're worried about. In person, on the phone, or via zoom, force the conversation: "How are you doing, and what can I do to support you?"

Thursday

- Use the [Mindful Minute](#) tool as a "Do Now" at the start of faculty/staff meeting, to give people a chance for forward-thinking reflection and to gather quick data about morale and well-being.

Schedule two or three 30-minute check-ins with direct reports for next week. Ask how they're doing, and help them break down big problems into goals and manageable steps. Endeavor to make sure all employees get a check-in like this from a leader every few weeks.

Friday

- Have a "Faculty/Staff Support Team" meeting, gathering key leaders quickly to discuss any employees you're worried about and to identify next steps.

Your sustainability matters, too. Identify one thing you'll do this weekend to give yourself a break.

Send one Spotlight as either the first thing you do each morning or the last thing before you leave each night.

