

**Essential Guides for
EARLY CAREER
TEACHERS**

*Mental Well being
and Self Care*

Essential Guides for Early Career Teachers

The *Essential Guides for Early Career Teachers* provide accessible, carefully researched, quick-reads for early career teachers, covering the key topics you will encounter during your training year and first two years of teaching. They complement and are fully in line with the new Early Career Framework and are intended to assist ongoing professional development by bringing together current information and thinking on each area in one convenient place. The texts are edited by Emma Hollis, Executive Director of NASBTT (the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers), who brings a wealth of experience, expertise and knowledge to the series.

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Essential Guides for **EARLY CAREER TEACHERS**

Mental Well being and Self-Care

Sally Price
Series editor: **Emma Hollis**



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Meet the series editor



Emma Hollis

I am Executive Director of NASBTT (the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers) and my absolute passion is teacher education. After gaining a first-class degree in psychology I trained as a primary teacher, and soon became head of Initial Teacher Training for a SCITT provider. I am dedicated to ensuring teachers are given access to high-quality professional development at the early stages of and throughout their careers.

Meet the author



Sally Price

I am a well-being and support officer and am on the central training team at Oxfordshire Teacher Training. I work in schools to support early career teachers with their mental health and well-being, and in teacher training locations with trainees, their mentors and programme leaders. Drawing on over 20 years of teaching experience in secondary and primary settings, I am interested in the role and responsibility of employing schools in nourishing the developing autonomy of those new to the profession, as well as those who have been teaching for longer.

Foreword

As a passionate advocate of high-quality teacher education and continuing professional development, it has always been a source of frustration for me that beyond the ITT year, access to high-quality, structured ongoing professional development has always been something of a lottery for teachers. Access and support have been patchy, with some schools and local authorities offering fantastic opportunities for teachers throughout their careers while in other locations CPD has been given lip service at best and, at worst, is non-existent.

This series was conceived of to attempt to close some of those gaps and to offer accessible professional learning to busy teachers in the early stages of their careers. It was therefore a moment of genuine pleasure when proposals for an entitlement for all early career teachers to receive a package of support, guidance and education landed on my desk. There is now a genuine opportunity for school communities to work together to offer the very best early career development for our most precious of resources – the teachers in our schools.

The aim of this series is to distil some of the key topics which occupy the thoughts of early career teachers into digestible, informative texts which will promote discussion, contemplation and reflection and will spark further exploration into practice. In each edition, you will find a series of practical suggestions for how you can put the ‘big idea’ in each chapter into practice – now, next week and in the long term. By offering opportunities to bring the learning into the classroom in a very concrete way, we hope to help embed many of the principles we share into day-to-day teaching.

Teaching is the best job in the world. Teaching is also a very tough job. In my experience, entrants to the profession generally go in with their eyes wide open, expecting to experience the rough with the smooth – but even then, they are frequently surprised by some of the challenges they face. In too many instances, early career teachers become overwhelmed by the demands placed on them and flounder, losing sight of what attracted them to the profession in the first place. In this title on self care, Sally Price walks you through some simple, practical approaches to taking care of yourself so that you can be the best possible teacher for the pupils in your care. Her message is really quite simple – teaching really is the best job in the world, but to enjoy it to the full you need to put yourself first.

I hope you enjoy exploring this book as much as I have enjoyed editing it.

Emma Hollis
Executive Director, NASBT

Introduction

At 13 years of age, my friend Louise and I saw our music teacher, Mr Wallace, buying onions in Kwiksave. At the time, we thought the idea of a teacher buying onions was the most hilarious thing in the world. But, of course, teachers do buy onions just like the rest of us – and just like the rest of us, teachers have times in their lives when they don't feel so great. It is therefore important for you (and everyone else) to realise that, sometimes, it is ok not to feel great. It is even better if you understand what to do when that happens, and ideally have access to the tools to prevent it happening (as much as can ever be possible) in the first place.

This is an interesting title to write since, in my experience, teachers who require guidance on their self care and well-being often will not allow themselves to seek help until it is far too late. All teachers need to practise self care and look after their well-being. You might choose not to call it that, you might not know that's what you're doing, or you may not do it until it is too late. This book is responding to the fact that there are clearly many teachers who aren't in touch with what it is they need to do in order to stay well and happy in their jobs. This is particularly the case for those at the start of their teaching careers: *'out of those teachers qualifying to teach in state schools in 2012, 35% were no longer in service 5 years later'* (DfE, 2018).

Self care is defined by the Brilliant Idea Studio as the maintenance of your immunity: physical, mental and spiritual. When looking at well-being, as an Early Career Teacher (ECT), you may usefully consider mental well-being as what is occurring internally as opposed to what might be externally visible to school communities. The World Health Organization defines mental well-being as the extent to which we feel cheerful, relaxed, active, rested and interested in life. MHFA England defines four stages of mental health need: whether you are coping, concerning, significant or critical in terms of your level of need; these judgements can be both subjective and objective. Having guided ECTs for many years as they find their way to the right teaching setting for them, I would argue that it is certainly worth prioritising your self care and well-being needs in a preventative capacity alongside your responsibilities as a developing teacher. The consequences of not doing so are far-reaching.

This book hopes to demonstrate that, while it may seem contradictory, seeking support from others can often be the easiest way to discovering that the best solutions lie within your own self. Just as UCET's Schools' Reference Group highlighted (Greer, 2018), *'finding the balance between public and personal responsibility is complex'*. But not impossible. The best way I have found to persuade those reluctant to engage with the idea of community responsibility for raised mental health awareness is to consider it not as a tool for *'indulging learned*

helplessness’ but rather as a tool for *‘enabling self-agency’* (Price, 2019). Having worked over the past 20 years within an arena of increasing school accountability and austerity, I have worked with 20 cohorts of staff, trainees and pupils. As I have listened to the frustrations of those learning to learn (both teachers and pupils) in large educational settings, two game-changing words keep cropping up – autonomy and control. I have become increasingly convinced that the frustrations faced by children in school as they struggle between needing support and paradoxically needing independence are directly comparable to the frustrations faced by adults in their early teaching career. Both pupils and new teachers are learning. Both need help. Both need to be trusted to own their learning. With careful support, both can flourish. With too much or too little support, both can flounder. In the eight chapters that follow, I present some solutions which are proving helpful to some teachers in some situations. Indeed, while community awareness and support is key, it is also useful to remember that everyone’s mental health is unique.

From my own experience of working with local primary and secondary colleagues in recruiting and selecting trainees, and in consultation with colleagues across the country, it is evident that the teacher workforce is becoming increasingly diverse, supporting and reflecting the increasingly diverse pupil populations they teach. Diversity of ethnicity, gender and physical disability is subject to regional variation. What is accepted and welcomed in large-city school settings may not so readily be the case in coastal or rural areas, mirroring social patterns. Neurodiversity, however, while being represented in all pupil populations irrespective of location, is only now starting to be welcomed, valued and discussed within the teaching profession. A trainee teacher with whom I worked closely two years ago spoke out at a local meeting on mental health and well-being and then at national level for disabled teachers’ consultation conferences. She is both brave and groundbreaking and represents the importance of the norm accepting the unique. Her pupils are extraordinarily lucky to have her as their inspiration. She has a chronic and managed mental health condition and teaches. She may be unique and she is by no means alone.

My first teaching post started just after the death of Princess Diana. Since then, I have worked with a great team of colleagues; seen many come and go; seen young people at their best and at their worst; been bereaved a few times; experienced divorce, remarriage, miscarriage, brought up kids; bought onions. My first head of department dragged me to the communal staffroom and forced me to get to know colleagues. My second head of department taught me the power of humour. She has an enviable capacity to maintain a healthy philosophical perspective even in the most challenging of times. Latterly – rather than teaching young people – my role focuses on supporting teachers who train with us and who teach across primary, secondary, special and mainstream settings within the county. I’ve also been lucky enough to travel further afield, meet truly inspirational

teachers and specialists and train and learn with many varied minds, all of whom have the same core motivation: that of giving young people the best possible start in life. With their support, these young people are therefore developing the best possible set of sustainable strategies to approach life's inevitable challenges. Some teachers do this by facilitating a passion for knowledge and a growing confidence and competence in their subject; some do this by supporting the development of social and coping skills; some do both. Firm yet nurturing support as young people grapple with burgeoning independence and the bumps on the way seems to be working well as a strategy for many of the wonderful people I have met. One of whom, Josh Connolly, ambassador of the National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACOA), believes young people to be '*naturally resourceful and whole*'. I agree. And if this is true, then a teacher's role is arguably to support young people to engage with and acknowledge their resources, in order to find and enjoy a sustainable way of living and to tap into that resourcefulness. The most efficient way to do this? – active and overt role-modelling.

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Acronym buster

Acronym	What does it stand for?	Notes/links
A&E	Accident and Emergency	Department of hospital
AB	Appropriate body	Organisation responsible for quality assurance in Newly Qualified Teacher induction at their employing school
ALGEE	Approach; Listen; Give support and information; Encourage professional support; Encourage other support for the person, for their friends and family	Mental Health First Aid England guidelines for supporting someone in a mental health first aid situation www.mhfaengland.org
AOB	Any other business	For example, on a meeting agenda
BACP	British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy	www.bacp.co.uk/
CBT	Cognitive behavioural therapy	
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Groups	
CPD	Continuing professional development	
CPSQ	Cambridge Personal Style Questionnaire	
DBT	Dialectical behaviour therapy	
DfE	Department for Education	www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education
DSA	Disabled Students' Allowance	
DSL	Designated safeguarding lead	
DT	Design and technology	
ECF	Early Career Framework	
ECT	Early career teacher	
EHCP	Education and Health Care Plan	
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation	

Acronym	What does it stand for?	Notes/links
GP	General practitioner (doctor)	
HR	Human resources	
INSET	In-service training	
ITT	Initial Teacher Training	
LAC	Looked after child	
MAT	Multi-academy trust	
MBTI	Myers-Briggs Type Indicator	
MHFA	Mental Health First Aid	www.mhfaengland.org
MOT	Ministry of Transport	
NACOA	National Association for Children of Alcoholics	www.nacoa.org.uk
NASBTT	National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers	www.nasbtt.org.uk
NEF	New Economics Foundation	https://neweconomics.org
NEU	National Education Union	https://neu.org.uk
NHS	National Health Service	
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher	
OIA	Office for Independent Adjudicators	
ONS	Office for National Statistics	
OUH	Oxford University Hospitals	
16PF	16 personality factor tool	
PPA	Planning, preparation and assessment time	
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit	
PTA	Parent Teacher Association	
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status	
RSE	Relationships and sex education	
SCITT	School-centred Initial Teacher Training	

Acronym	What does it stand for?	Notes/links
SDIP	School Development and Improvement Plan	
SDQ	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire	
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability	
SLT	Senior leadership team	
SMART	Specific, measurable, agreed upon, realistic, time-based	Usually referring to objectives/ goals
TA	Teaching assistant	
TES	<i>Times Educational Supplement</i>	
TS	Teachers' Standards	www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards
UCET	Universities Council for the Education of Teachers	www.ucet.ac.uk
WISE	Wellbeing in Secondary Education (University of Bristol ongoing project)	www.bristol.ac.uk/population-health-sciences/projects/wise/background.html
WRAP	Wellness Recovery Action Plan (Mental Health First Aid, England)	https://mhfaengland.org

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