



Wellbeing and Mental Health through Covid-19

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About Us

- Kate Aspinwall, Head of Company HR
- Catherine Tallis, Director of Business Services
- Herts for Learning is the UK's largest schools-owned company, providing a broad range of education and business services that support schools and settings to deliver improved outcomes for children.
- We have c 400 staff in a range of roles from apprentices to highly experienced education consultants
- Our business has always been client facing and was founded on face to face delivery. We have rapidly adapted our business in the last year at the same time as introducing a new Payroll and CRM system!



How are you feeling?

1. Great- Lockdown, Schmokdown
2. Muddling through- I'm doing my best to stay positive but it's not easy
3. Feeling really low- stop the new world, I want to get off and go back to the old world
4. A bit of all 3!



Are you still in love with your job?

1. Absolutely! New ways of working suit me and I am more motivated than ever
2. Not always - there are good days and bad!
3. Not even coffee can motivate me - all the joy has gone from my role

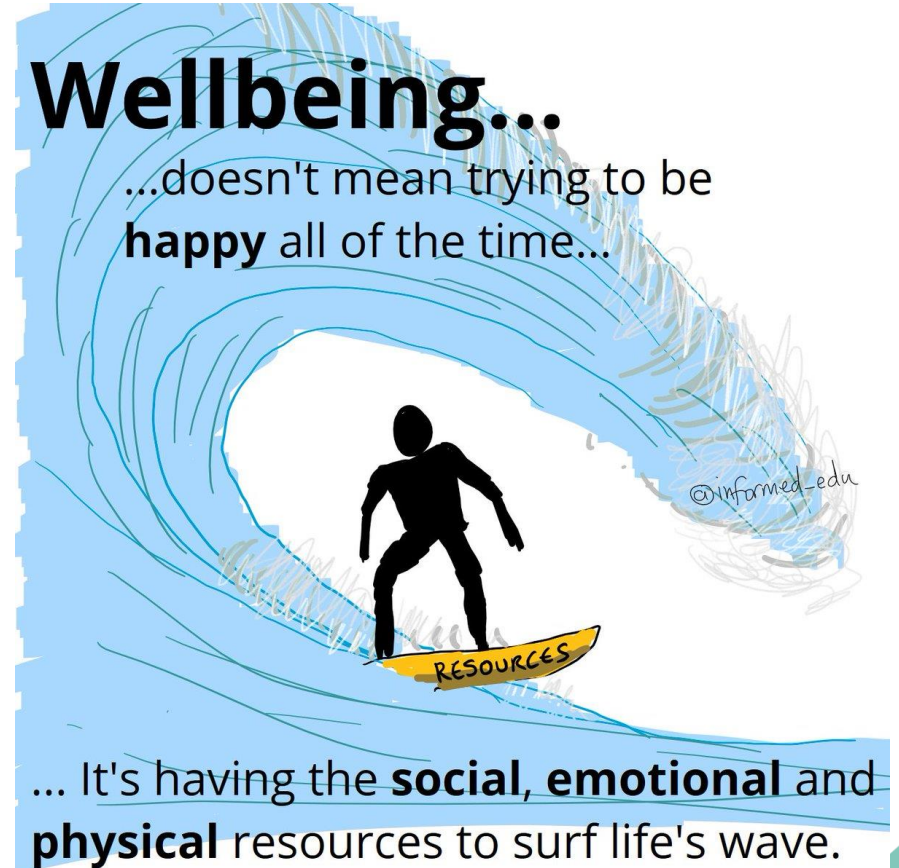


An evolving situation

- Covid-19 continues to be an emotional rollercoaster for us all.
- As time has moved on, we have found a “new normal”. At times it feels like ground hog day.
- It struck me on Tuesday 4th that we expected everyone to just get on with it, completely different to Lockdown 1
- At HfL we have seen mental health emergencies and burnout. The longer we are into the pandemic, the greater impact on wellbeing.
- The wheels have fallen off the “make do and mend” approach.
- I am seeing my colleagues more easily irritated, concerned about job security and finding it challenging to separate work and home.

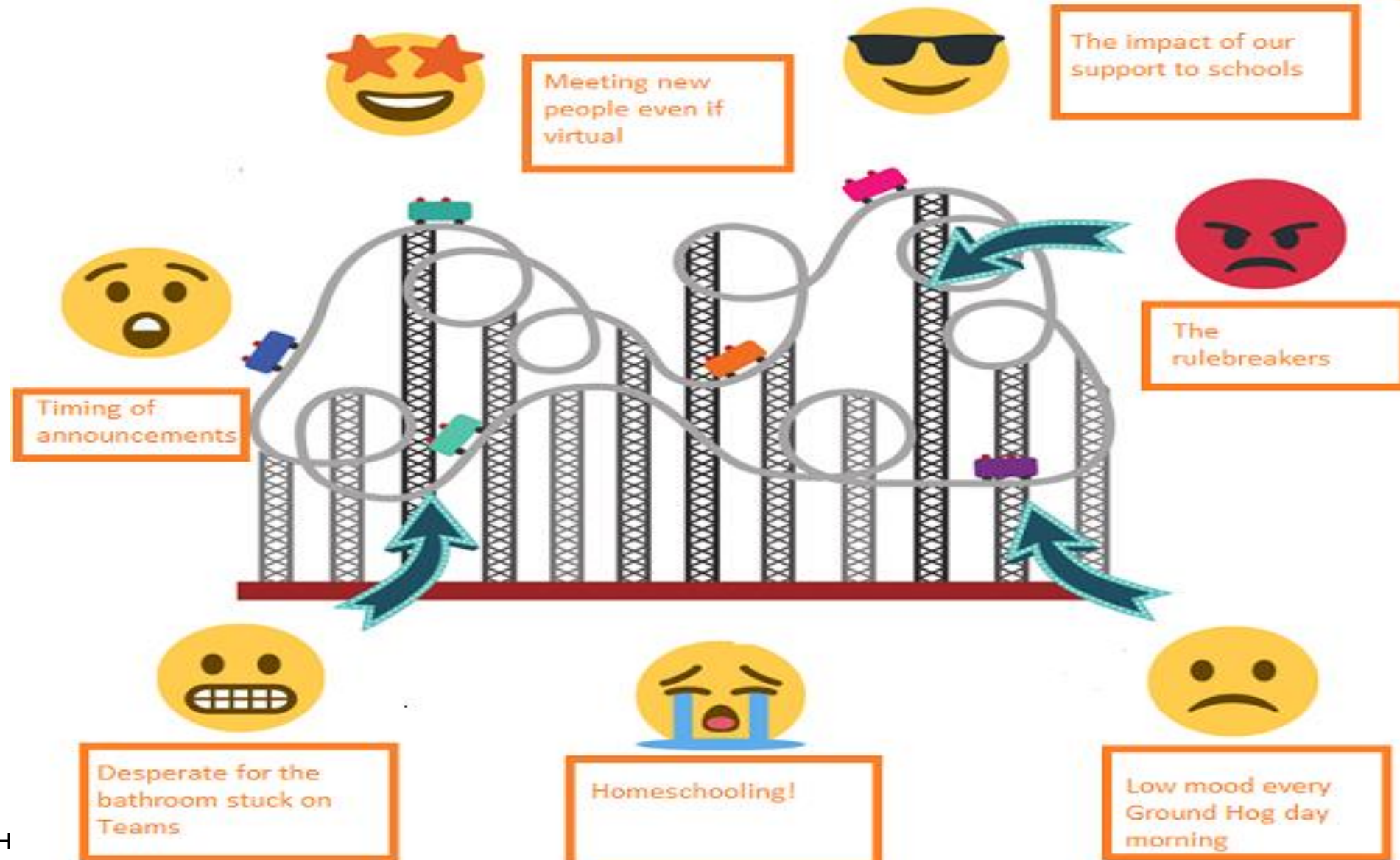
Wellbeing...

...doesn't mean trying to be **happy** all of the time...



... It's having the **social, emotional** and **physical** resources to surf life's wave.

ALL ABOARD THE COVID-19 EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER V3



How have I managed well-being

1. Self-Care

Fastening my oxygen mask

2. Proactively supporting the well-being of my teams



Always fill your
own cup first

AND ALLOW THE WORLD TO BENEFIT FROM
THE OVERFLOW

Self Care

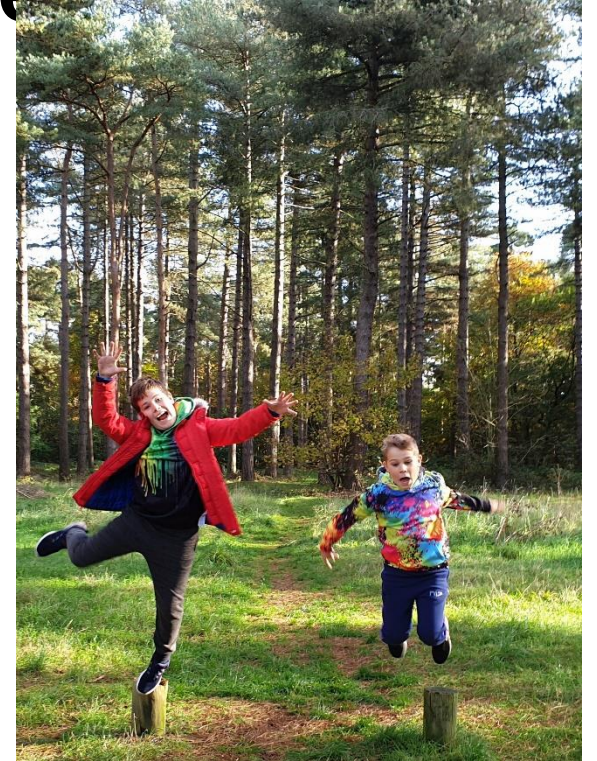
Securing your own oxygen mask

- However you are feeling self-care will be critical to getting through the months ahead.
- Taking care of yourself first is not selfish, as leaders we need to do this if we are to get everyone through a challenging winter
- Remember who you really are. Find the place to laugh and giggle- it won't be at your home-working desk. Recognise that you need a source of strength in order to be strong.
- With less social contact this can be hard. For many of us our sources of strength have been cut-off, so we need to find new ones.



How I have practised self-care

- Being kind to myself when I make mistakes
- I am a Director **but I am not an emotional sponge**
- A recognition that this is a marathon and not a sprint. The emails/instant messages don't stop but I do! My team know I need downtime too! 80/20 rule.
- I've found a safety net of like minded peers outside of my area and speak to them far more than I did pre-Covid
- Dog walks
- Home Schooling Raincoat and Wellies



How have I managed well being for the team

- Early recognition that this is personal for us all! So different to being in an office. Essential to understand personal challenges of those you manage.
- 5 mins of personal chat at the start of every 121. Sought to replace kitchen chats where I can.
- Where I know people are back to back, suggesting a delayed start to meetings so they can grab a cup of tea and visit the bathroom!
- 3 x 30 minute check-ins per week to discuss major developments, cascade company decisions around Covid and exchange information. It's important that team feel informed.
- Following-up when colleagues are clearly struggling and agreeing a way forward. We have all had difficult days and weeks. I have instructed one report to take a week's unpaid leave after an incident and regularly told my reports to step away from the laptop.

How have I managed well-being for the team (ctd)

- Instant messages and calls when we have successes- it's easy not to celebrate at home
- Challenging poor performance. It's important that people feel that we have their back and everyone is held to the same high standards. This will become more important as those of us that have worked through become more exhausted.
- Setting really clear expectations on upholding our values. Trust, Inspiration and Collaboration, all can be challenging through a long pandemic. Calling out where these slip is key to wellbeing despite the difficult conversations.
- Showed my vulnerabilities empowering them to share theirs. I have been seen ironing at 8.30am calls and shared my son's mental health challenges.

How are you practising self-care?



Returning to the Office

- We don't know when this will be- seems unlikely before Easter
- Many of us are unlikely to go back to a life of 5 days a week in the office. We have introduced a work from anywhere policy which means no more than 3 days per week in the office.
- 1/4 of my reports no longer live in commuting distance which is liberating
- We have enabled the office to be used for colleagues who can't work from home e.g. risk of interruption during critical training or personal safety issues.



Keeping our customers on-board

- Our business is our people, our first priority is therefore to keep them healthy
- Some schools have been pushing for us to revert back to our business model pre-pandemic, others are keen to continue remotely. We have a broad portfolio and therefore need to consider service by service
- We are constantly reviewing our approach given a fast changing situation and this is adding to stress and strain.
- We are finding that some of our staff need to be in schools to get a sense of purpose whilst others remain anxious. This is challenging from a leadership perspective as there simply can't be a one size fits all approach to suit customers and staff.



Did furlough help?

- We were able to ask for volunteers to be furloughed
 - Those that were struggling, had options
 - Highlighted our biggest wellbeing concerns
 - Couldn't mean out of sight, out of mind
- Later, we also had to compulsorily furlough people
 - Created a new wellbeing challenge
 - The struggle of not being able to work whilst trying to keep people up to date, was delicate
- This population needed close monitoring
- Important not to presume the return to work would be straightforward
- We ended our use of the CJRS in September



Returning furloughed colleagues

- So much had changed
 - Not just our offer to customers, but new systems too!
 - The shock and novelty of working over Teams was once again apparent
- The pandemic didn't stop in September
- Intensely difficult term ahead with 'hybrid' teaching and learning
 - Customers needed more help than ever, consistently
 - Colleagues needed more flexibility than ever
- Sinking in what life after Covid may look like
- Major life decisions for some, limping by for others – all reactions to a crisis
- Wellbeing keynote at company conference to kickstart team conversations
- Straight back on the rollercoaster



Mental ill health cannot wait

- We, like most employers, dealt with crises
 - 1 in 4 of us deal with a mental health issue every year
 - 2020 stats aren't included
- Managers and colleagues showed constant care for each other
- Executive Leaders role model by talking openly about mental health, reducing stigma wherever possible
- Office closures and restrictions through tiers always acknowledged mental health needs as an essential reason to travel into the office.
 - We still do
- 16 of us are now becoming certified Mental Health First Aiders through MHFA England



Where are we today?

- Staycations over summer didn't provide the rest and relaxation that summer holidays usually do
- Compulsory Christmas shut down
 - Didn't quite give the Education sector the break that it needed
- Are we used to it yet? Can we roll with it?
- Avoiding furlough but...
- ...recognising that home schooling looks different this time around – are we victims of our own success?!
- It's not only parents whose responsibilities are different again
- Prioritise and diarise. All Leaders must role model

Covid-19 Dial in: 020 3321 5202, Conference	
Walk - can't do it later so DO NOT MOVE	
Fiona PADS review Microsoft Teams Meeting Fiona Burke	Quick catch up; Microsoft Teams Meeting; Kate
	Team catch up; Microsoft Teams Meeting; Fio
	Andrea/Kate catch up; Microsoft Teams Meeting
	Review procurement policy Microsoft Teams Meeting Nicola Wiley
Team catch up; Microsoft Teams Meeting; Fio	
Hold for Online Mental Health First Aid Course	Prep for BESA Wellbeing slides Microsoft Teams Meeting Catherine Tallis
	Focusmate session
	Lunch and walk
Lunch and PE lesson	Andrew/Kate re. Leaders' briefing; Microsoft T
Keep free - reflection time	COLA., Bonus and Working Anywhere policy Microsoft Teams Meeting Andrew Griffiths CFO
Maths Lesson with Mia, do not move	Maths with Mia, don't move
Complete MHR PM Doc	



Herts for Learning (HfL) is a provider of products and services to schools and educational settings within and outside Hertfordshire. We believe that every young person, through access to a great education, should be able to realise their potential, regardless of where they live or their circumstances. We focus on supporting the schools we work with to achieve successful long-term outcomes for their children.

Learn more about us at **hertsforlearning.co.uk**