

Rest, boundaries and ways to have the holiday we all deserve 😊

As we move towards the end of term we wanted to offer all members a couple of reflective activities **to support us in slowing down and switching off for the holidays**. If you're not sure about this, take a moment to reflect on:

- everything you have contributed to your school community,
- all the unexpected (and anticipated) challenges you've navigated
- the many, many ways you've supported your learners and colleagues.

You now deserve to rest (in a way that's good and right for you). A bit of reflection and planning can help us make this happen.

These activities were shared by Education Support at the EIS AGM in Dundee and the delegates who attended found them empowering. There's bit more on the work of Education Support after the activities themselves:

Intentional rest

- **Activity:** Write down a list of **activities you can choose in a day to give yourself slices of rest – those that fit into 30 seconds, 3 minutes and 30 minutes**.
- **How this can help:** Rest is really important to us being well and working well. It can also be really hard with the mix of responsibilities, expectations and challenges we are working with every day, added to the way technology makes it very easy to be 'always on' or always available. Having a made a list of what is restful for us and keeping it somewhere visible (maybe even writing it with colleagues, friends and family or sharing it with them) is one way we can encourage ourselves to look after our needs through the day. Some people plan their rest activities into their daily schedule in the same way they plan the tasks they need to do. We deserve time doing what restores us and switching off from everything else. A list of these activities might help us to make more of our holidays. In term time, this list could also help us to be well resourced for the work we do and the people we work with.
- **Further resource:** *To explore this further, there's a pre-recorded webinar [Switching off over summer: how to rest and recharge \(educationsupport.org.uk\)](https://www.educationsupport.org.uk) available for you to watch any time on their website.*

Defining our boundaries

- **Activity:** Take 5mins to talk about or write down your answers to these two questions, which were asked at the Education Support fringe event:
 - How are you preparing for rest as you transition out of the academic year? What are you letting go of? What do you want to welcome more of?
 - What boundaries are you putting in place for when you transition into a new academic year? What are your wellbeing non-negotiables?

- **How this can help:** In our current culture it's very easy to be always on, or at least on too often. We were encouraged to be intentional about how **we create clear(er) boundaries for ourselves, boundaries which let us know that we are switching off from work and slowing down into the holidays**. These may be choices we need to make, conversations we need to have or actions that we choose to clearly signal to ourselves and other people what we need to have our holiday in the way that's right for us. Also, now can be a good time to reflect on our experiences of this year, to notice where we had good boundaries which helped us and where we might want things to be different next session. **Choosing now which boundaries we need as we start a new academic year and saving them somewhere we can find them in August can also support our wellbeing going into the new school term.**
- **Further resource:** *Education Support have produced a practical and easy to navigate guide to boundaries which you can access here - [16-setting-boundaries.pdf](https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/16-setting-boundaries.pdf) ([educationsupport.org.uk](https://www.educationsupport.org.uk)). It includes advice on the all important skill of saying no (and different ways we can say this). They also have a pre-recorded webinar exploring this - [Boundaries, Rest and Letting Go: How to give yourself permission](https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/boundaries-rest-and-letting-go-how-to-give-yourself-permission) ([educationsupport.org.uk](https://www.educationsupport.org.uk)) you can access any time.*

As mentioned, these reflective activities are part of the work Education Support shared with us in Dundee. Throughout their contributions to the AGM they **affirmed the importance of rest** as part of our professional lives (as well as our personal lives) and offered us space **to reflect on how we can build the boundaries that we need to do this job well and stay well.**

These messages were especially welcome given the first day of Conference had seen the presentation of the EIS's teacher workload research which highlights the need for "a policy focus on excessive work time and occupational wellbeing." You can find this here - [Teacher Workload Research | SU4QE \(eis.org.uk\)](https://www.eis.org.uk/teacher-workload-research-su4qe). The research is powerful, but it can be hard to read its accurate measuring of our overwork without having actions to address this. The evidence in this report makes clear – we need to look after ourselves and our colleagues. **Education Support shared with us actions we can take for ourselves now to challenge the culture of overwork we're in.** We'd really encourage you to take the time to reflect on these and possibly do so with other colleagues too. Our Local Association Learning Reps are currently working on CLPL opportunities for next session which will also give more structured opportunities to explore rest, boundaries and other ways to stay well as we do our work in schools and beyond.

This action for individual wellbeing does not reduce the work needed at a policy and systems level to see better support and reductions in workload for us all. Instead, focusing on our individual wellbeing allows us to pick up tools and approaches we can use now to look after ourselves, and each other, as we continue to teach and continue to stand up for quality education.

Finally, these activities are important but may not be enough right now. Anyone can have a time when they need more support with their mental health and wellbeing. **Education Support have a help line you can call to speak to a trained clinician – 0800 562 561. This can be to address a one off issue or to help you understand the support you might need as you deal with a longer term struggle.** We also have **PAM Assist** as our workplace wellbeing support

provider and **GPs** can help too, as well as being able to signpost mental health support within our communities. If you need more support just now, reach out for it.

As you head into the holidays, be kind to yourself and keep being kind to each other.

Claire Chalmers

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