

Best Practice: How to manage stress

There is an increased focus on work-related stress in HR in almost all occupations across the world. This also applies to teachers and school leaders who are under pressure from politicians and parents to ensure excellent and competitive results, who work under challenging circumstances, and whose responsibilities often go beyond teaching in the classroom.

In Sierra Leone, teachers face added challenges of overcrowding in the classroom; lack of facilities, materials and tools; and HR processes still under improvement.

There is a considerable literature on the subject of work-related stress and advice can also be found online. The teaching service may organise conferences, seminars and training on this topic which should be included in school leader training and mentoring programmes.

Sierra Leonean school leaders and others gave the following simple, general, good advice to manage stress:

- Try to maintain a good work-life balance. The TSC, SMC/BoG and school must enable this.
- Keep a tidy and orderly classroom.
- Plan your time. Prepare realistic weekly and daily plans for tasks, including timing and stick to it.
- Do one task at a time; do not think of the 4-5 other tasks you need to do later.
- Keep meetings short and focussed. Keep to the planned end time of the meeting.
- Receive mentoring and coaching by a trusted senior or peer if you need to adjust your work methods.
- Confide with a trusted colleague or guidance counsellor when you face challenges
- Keep fit, eat healthy food and exercise regularly.
- Nurture a good social life.
- Nurture positive thoughts. Turn your negatives to positives.
- Practice prayer, mindfulness, meditation, breathing exercises.

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