

# Educational Psychology Matters

## Sharing our Knowledge and Skills for the Benefit of All

### Take a break before you need a break

*The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.*

**William James**

*You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them.*

**Maya Angelou**

This month's topic from the Educational Psychology Service is how we care for ourselves. As professionals involved in education we want to put others first. We care and we came into this profession to live our values, however, without valuing ourselves equally with the people we serve we can end up depleted, stressed and unable to do the jobs we care about. Self care over the winter months can ensure you can continue to be there for yourself, your family AND the Children and Young People of Falkirk. We propose **Life: Work Balance** instead of Work: Life Balance over the coming weeks into the holiday season.

### Stress

Stress in itself is neither a good or a bad thing— it is the body's way of dealing with events, it can keep us alert and challenged to strive to do better or to learn. The difficulty arises when we experience long term stress without a rest or chance to catch our breath and let our bodies recover. We all experience stress differently and need find ways to live with the inevitable stressors of life *and* thrive using healthy strategies that work for us.

Another key is to develop a culture where it's ok to talk and share experiences rather than a culture where being stressed is seen as a sign that you are working really hard! We can all take responsibility for this and for looking inward and knowing and understanding ourselves.

A first step could be to bring into focus your life and the amount of stress you may be experiencing. The Holmes and Rahe (1967) stress scale is the classic measure of stressful life events. You can take this test online—try here: <http://bit.ly/1d3g9ty>. Please treat the results cautiously.

### Top 5 Tips for Spotting Stress

1. You are finding it more difficult to find solutions to problems.
2. You are tired and do not feel like you are getting the benefits from your sleep.
3. You don't feel as in control of your emotions.
4. Time management has become more challenging.
5. It is harder to concentrate.

#### Other options

You are eating more or less than usual

Making decisions has become harder.

You may feel you are forgetting more things.

**Mindfulness-** The research base for the benefits of practising mindfulness is growing. One simple way to experience mindfulness in the course of your day is to become aware of yourself while you are eating. Simply concentrating on what you are eating and doing **just** that during a meal a day. Notice when you start thinking about something else entirely other than your food. When you've become aware bring yourself back to the textures, flavours and smell of your meal. You may need to do this a few times to develop a mindfulness muscle.

### More Resources

For more exploration on stress

[www.stepsforstress.org](http://www.stepsforstress.org)

Mindfulness in Scotland

[www.mindfulnessscotland.org.uk/](http://www.mindfulnessscotland.org.uk/)

To keep up-to-date with information and training find Falkirk Council Educational Psychologists on Twitter.

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