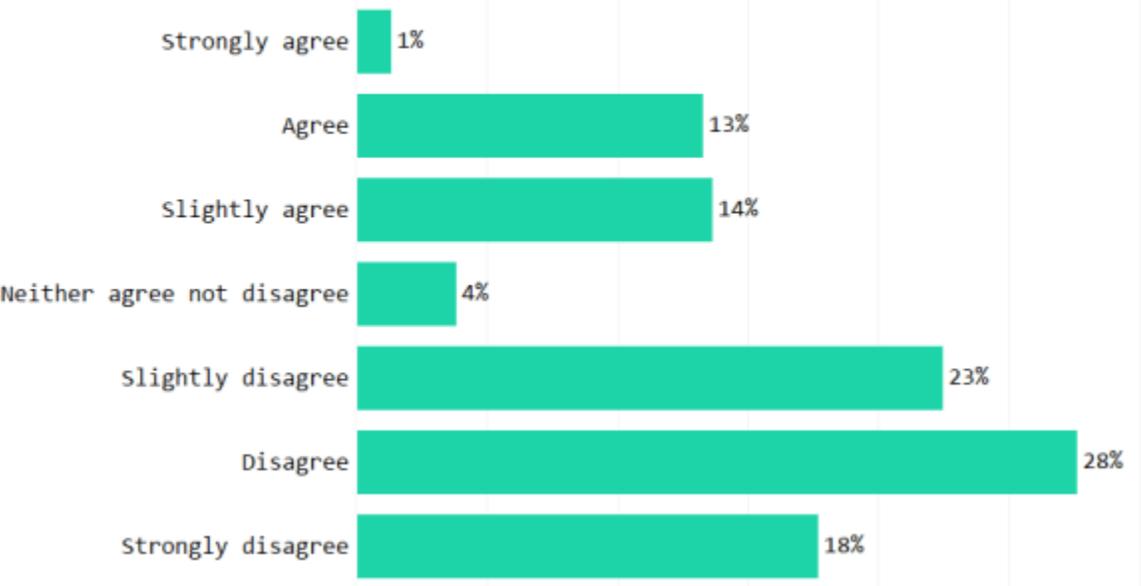


Things teachers can do to protect their mental health.

Recent reports recorded a number of teachers for a survey conducted on teachers with regards to how well they took care of themselves and their mental health. This research was conducted so that districts can better provide counselling for education staff experiencing problems or any difficulties with their mental health as a result of te job specs. As departments have repeatedly failed in assisting teachers in recent years and the increase in numbers of teachers leaving the profession due to the diminishing mental health of education staff is a serious concern.

African schools are already facing a “severe shortage” of teachers. In a recent Teacher Tapp survey, 69% of respondents disagreed (to varying degrees) that the stress levels they experience are acceptable for the job they do.

Do you agree that stress levels are acceptable for the job that you do?



But why is mental health such an issue for teachers today and what can teachers do to look after their own wellbeing? Seeing that the districts are not providing the kind of support that teachers are in need of.

Why Is Mental Health Such an Issue for School Teachers Today?

The expectations placed on teachers have extended beyond planning lessons, leading classes, marking, and playground duties. There is an increasing demand for data capturing and reporting, in addition to the responsibilities that were not explicitly part of a teacher's role a decade ago, such as monitoring pupil wellbeing.

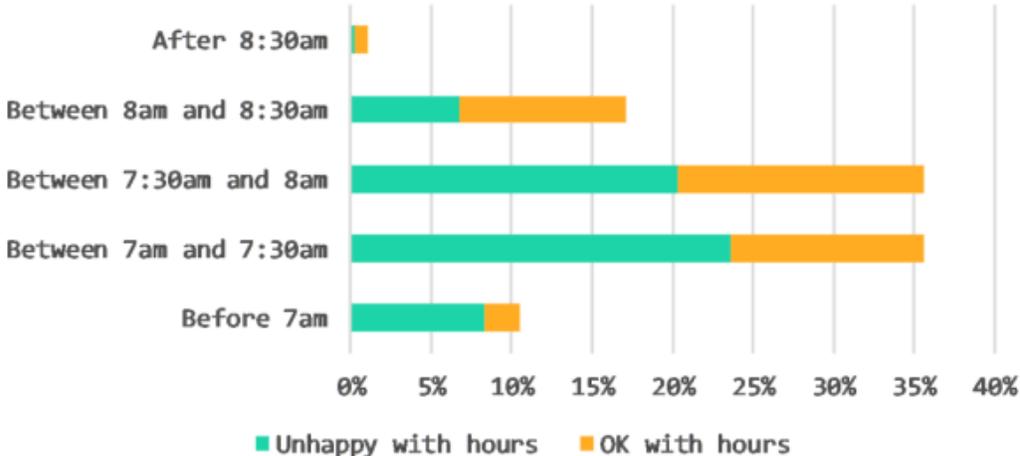
Many teachers who suffer "burnout" and leave the profession blame the ever-increasing workload resulting in stress. In a recent Teacher Tapp survey, 77% of those who took part stated "workload and work-life balance" as the cause of stress and unhappiness at work.

Have any of the following caused you to feel stressed or unhappy at work over the last 2 weeks? (Select as many as apply)

	Classroom teacher	SLT
Accountability, (including performance, test scores, inspections)	49%	40%
Workload and work-life balance	77%	64%
Administrative tasks	53%	36%
Relationship with colleagues	25%	31%
Relationship with parents	16%	26%
Relationship with senior leadership team	22%	15%
Pastoral concerns relating to pupils - e.g. mental health, safeguarding and behaviour	40%	42%
Other	6%	8%
I have not felt stressed or unhappy at work over the last 2 weeks	6%	6%

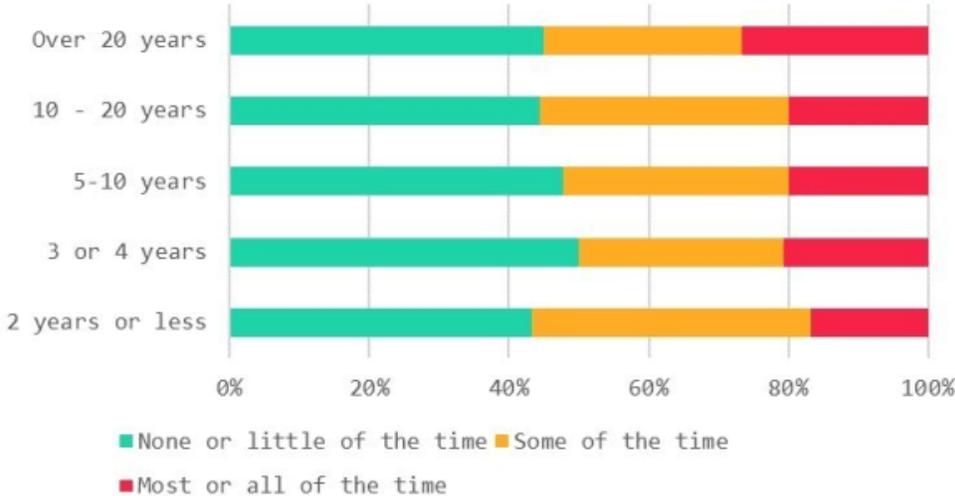
The majority of teachers that were polled mentioned that they start the school day long before people in other professions have even heard the alarm go off.

What time did you get to school this morning?

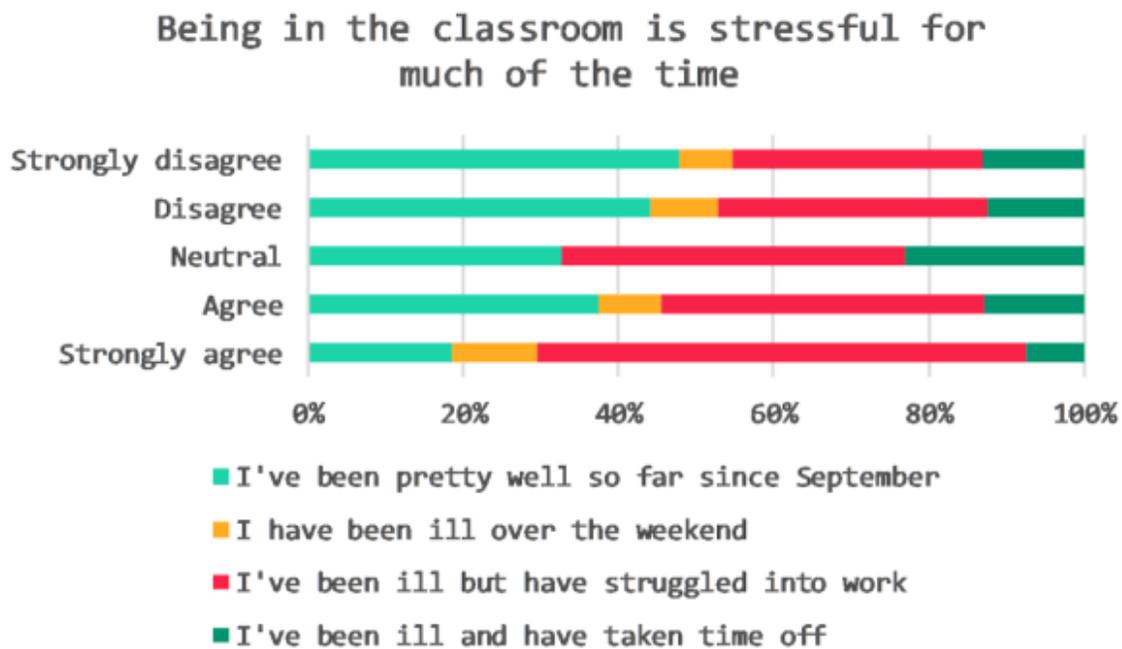


While the long school holidays are viewed by most as a benefit of teaching, school holidays also mean that a lot of teachers stuff their annual work hours into shorter periods of time, which can be an intense and stressful way to work, and this doesn't get any easier with time and experience.

Losing sleep over worry



The impact of high stress levels are compacted when people feel unable to take the time off they need to rest and recover. Although many of the teachers surveyed feel that being in the classroom is stressful “most of the time”, they seem to be more likely to struggle into work rather than take time off. Those who feel the most stress are the least likely to call in sick.



What Is the Impact of Poor Mental Health in Teaching?

A teacher suffering from mental health stresses of any nature will probably find it difficult to give their best in the classroom. This dip in teaching standards is likely to negatively impact the learning experience for the students and student progress. Staff absences due to mental health issues will also add to the workload of other teachers and may result in larger classes, with teachers required to cover classes as well as teach their own.

An increase in the number of people leaving the profession due to mental health issues will only accelerate the existing teaching shortage, as retention and recruitment will become even more challenging.

What Can Teachers Do to Maintain Positive Mental Health?

As the majority of the issues that lead to poor mental health seem to be workload related, changes must be made by the government and school leaders to protect the wellbeing of teachers. However, there are some steps teachers can take to protect their own mental health and make sure they continue being great teachers.

Learn to switch off , it can be incredibly hard to leave work behind you and enjoy your free time. A staggering 53% of teachers surveyed mentioned that they had dreamed about school in the last week at least once. This means that they're not even switching off from work when they sleep.

In the last week, have you had a dream about school?



3,530 responders on 01/06/2019

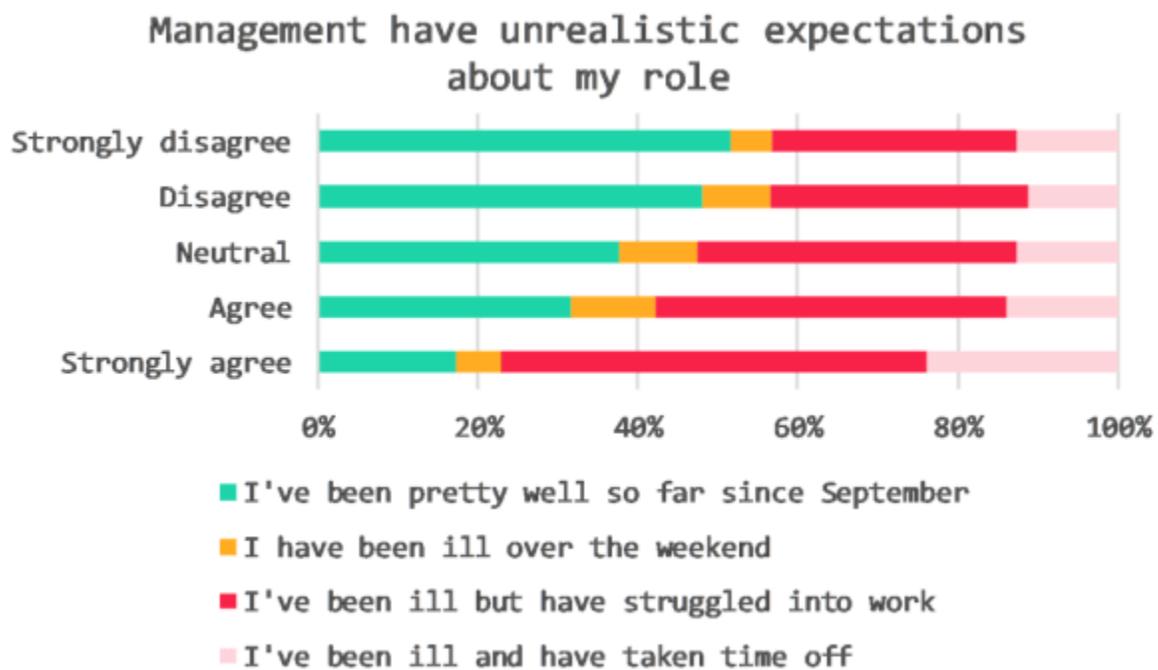


Taking some time away is essential. If you struggle to find the time or energy to make time for yourself, try planning your free time as you do your work. Put things in your diary and commit to them. Book out some time to exercise or make arrangements with a friend. It's much harder to let someone down and easier to stick to the plans you've already made, even when you're tired. Make non-work activities part of your routine.

Allow yourself some time off if you are not feeling well. Despite soaring stress levels, many educators drag themselves into work even when they are feeling unwell to be there. It may seem like you are doing the "right" thing, not letting anyone down and

keeping on top of your workload but in the long run, everybody will suffer if your health issues persist or become more severe. An unhealthy teacher is rarely an effective teacher. If you find it hard to call in sick, prepare a short handover email to send in after your call. You can highlight any important tasks that need to be completed or share a few useful pointers to help whoever will be covering your class/classes. This will take minutes, but it can ease your “guilt” over staying in bed.

Communicate. Sometimes, it’s good to vent, especially to colleagues who truly understand the position you are in. If you are feeling stressed or unhappy at work, talk to a colleague. Of course, it’s important to be mindful of professional etiquette, but talking through a problem could bring your stress levels right down and enable you to carry on with your day. If you are really struggling and have genuine concerns or complaints about your workload or other issues, it’s important that you raise them with senior staff. It may be that you bring an issue to their attention that they were unaware of but have an easy solution for. If you are a member of a Senior Leadership Team, make sure you communicate realistic expectations to teachers. The more a teacher feels their manager has unrealistic expectations of them, the more likely they are to take time off sick.



Do not let poor mental health escalate, prevention is the best cure. Occupied teachers have a tendency to keep going until they hit the breaking point. Getting healthy from this point is much harder than continually monitoring and maintaining your wellbeing and nipping issues in the bud when they arise. Get informed about mental health and learn the early signs of stress, depression and anxiety. If you sense you are heading down an unhealthy route, take steps to remedy the situation or seek help before the issue escalates. Most schools will be able to provide the support you need.