

# BOOK REVIEW

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## Teacher wellbeing – A real conversation for teachers and leaders

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As the title suggests, there's never been a more pressing time for a real conversation about teacher wellbeing. In a post-COVID world, the heightened focus on wellbeing is long overdue. Whilst the notion of wellbeing has always been on the agenda to varying degrees in our workplaces, it has more so been couched within the old adage, "Fruit bowls and yoga." Recent times have determined a need for a more explicit referencing of wellbeing within a strategic framework.

The writing has been on the wall for teachers for some time now, with an aging demographic, teacher shortage, crowded curriculum, increased accountability, and decreased autonomy, all within a media community that has little respect for or appreciation of the teaching profession. Teacher wellbeing is understandably at an all-time low.

As Green (2002) herself writes,

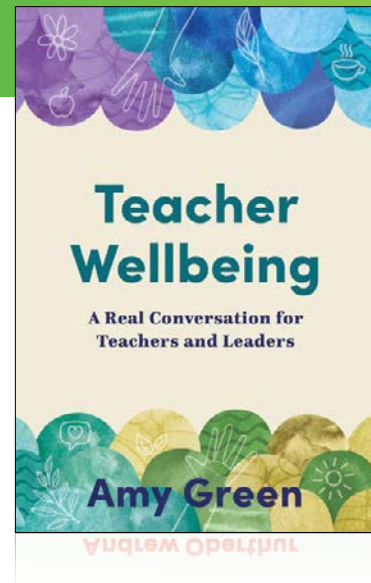
Teacher wellbeing ... is the most significant contributor to school culture. It is the missing link in school improvement. It should be on every school improvement plan, strategic plan and budget proposal. If we want thriving cultures in our schools we have to come back to our teachers ... It is about who and how teachers are. If we want real change in schools, from an individual to a systemic level, we have to get real about putting teachers at the centre of school and system level improvement agendas. (p. 10)

By doing so, she sets the scene in her call for action.

Part 1 of "Teacher Wellbeing" explores the various definitions of the topic, as well as what it is, its purpose, and where we got it wrong. Whilst there is that call for action, what appears to be standing in the way is our inability to be clear about what teacher wellbeing actually is (p. 12). We can't change what we can't describe. Green challenges us in this section to unlearn and relearn our significant knowledge pieces around wellbeing.

Starting with the World Health Organisation's (WHO) definition of wellbeing, Green sets our thinking of wellbeing within the context of mental health. WHO describes mental health as being a state of wellbeing ... one does not exist without the other. Straight away, Green positions the reader into a more serious consideration, far beyond the capabilities of any bowl of fruit or yoga pose.

Green goes on to describe the two types of wellbeing as being subjective (hedonic) and psychological (eudaimonic), both as important as each other, and both as contributive. It is with this clarity that we are brought to the understanding that for too long, our focus has solely been with subjective wellbeing – the quick, easy fixes that bring a level of instant gratification and satisfaction, whereas the longer term, more impactful fulfilment is only achieved through focusing on psychological wellbeing. This is where the hard work lies.



Part 2 of "Teacher wellbeing" unpacks the work of wellbeing. Through various models of wellbeing, Green steps the reader through a practical approach to building everyday wellbeing through the three main areas, namely energy and function, resilience, and emotional regulation. Part 3 then leads the reader to the next steps detailing practical strategies for teachers, as well as schools, in the development of self and collective efficacy.

Exceptionally well referenced, "Teacher wellbeing" is a well thought out text on all things related to teacher wellbeing. Green succinctly explores the topic whilst providing great insight into the contemporary Australian education landscape. She provides a practical approach to strategically improving wellbeing at a time when it is needed most.

Green quotes Jim Rohn in the opening of one of her chapters: "If someone is going down the wrong road, he [sic] doesn't need motivation to speed him up. What he needs is education to turn him around." This book provides the education to take those first turning steps.