

Looking after your teachers:

IMPROVING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN THE WORKPLACE

- PHIL LONGWELL
- THE ENGLISH UK ACADEMIC CONFERENCE
- ACADEMIC MANAGERS' DAY
- FRIDAY 18 JANUARY 2019



Introduction

- English Language Teacher since 2006
- Qualifications – NILE 2009, Warwick 2012
- Personal Experience of Poor Mental Health
- Mind Volunteer and Associate
- Time to Change 'Champion'
- Interview for Time to Talk Day - Feb 2017
- Research – December 2017
- LONDOSA + ELT Malta Workshops - 2018
- IATEFL Brighton 2018 + Webinar + Q&A
- Article in El Gazette - 2018



Background



Executive Summary



surveyed said they have faced physical and mental health issues in the last two years because of their work.



A third said that their job has made them feel stressed most or all of the time in the past few weeks, compared to 18% of the UK workforce overall.



Half have considered leaving the sector over the past two years as a result of health pressures.



The main reasons given are volume of workload and seeking a better work-life balance.

Source: Education Support Partnership / YouGov. (2017) Health Survey 2017. Available at: <https://www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk/resources/research-reports/2017-health-survey>

METRO

NEWS... BUT NOT AS YOU KNOW IT

NEWS SPORT ENTERTAINMENT SOAPS LIFESTYLE PLATFORM VIDEO MORE ▾

SEX FASHION FOOD TRAVEL

SOUTH OF FRANCE

FROM **£45** EACH WAY*

SALE ENDS 21 JANUARY

BOOK NOW

EURO

*Based on a return trip.

OPINION

Mental health sufferers like me will only thrive once employers step up and support us



Natasha Devon MBE

Writer and mental health activist

Thursday 17 Jan 2019 11:05 am

A 2018 **Bauer Media survey** discovered that 50 per cent of London-based employees who have taken time off work for a mental health issue told their line manager it was for a different reason.

This in turn means that the true cost to businesses of mental ill health is unknown, although the Centre for Mental Health **has estimated** the cost of sickness absence and reduced productivity to be around £35 billion every year.

< PRESS RELEASES

FORGET SOCIAL MEDIA! IT'S MONEY AND WORK THAT CAUSE BRITS THE MOST MENTAL STRESS

WHERE'S YOUR HEAD AT?
Let's Change The Law To Protect Our Mental Health

Source: <https://metro.co.uk/2019/01/17/mental-health-sufferers-like-will-thrive-employers-step-support-us-8347537/>

Background

Employers must do more to protect the mental health of staff

Camilla Nicholls

A healthy workplace is one where employees feel able to speak openly out about their mental health issues



It is evident to me that we are still in need of meaningful mental health support in all types of workplaces. HR departments need to be properly trained in recognising depression and addiction, in responding to the breakdown of relationships and bereavement and, importantly, know where to turn for trustworthy support. Everyone should have the right to attend therapy during their working day if required. An admission of vulnerability by senior figures in a workplace has the potential to foster more open dialogue about mental health and to help reduce the stigma associated with it. Each personal experience shared can help.

Source: Nicholls, C. (2018) Employers must do more to protect the mental health of staff in The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/12/employers-do-more-protect-mental-health-staff>

What are we going to do in this session..

- ◆ Discuss what kind of factors cause stress and burnout in our profession.
- ◆ Discuss whether it is right to disclose a mental health condition in the context you work in.
- ◆ Recognise some common symptoms of specific mental health conditions.
- ◆ Discuss ways a line manager can support its staff and what an employer can do.

Question.

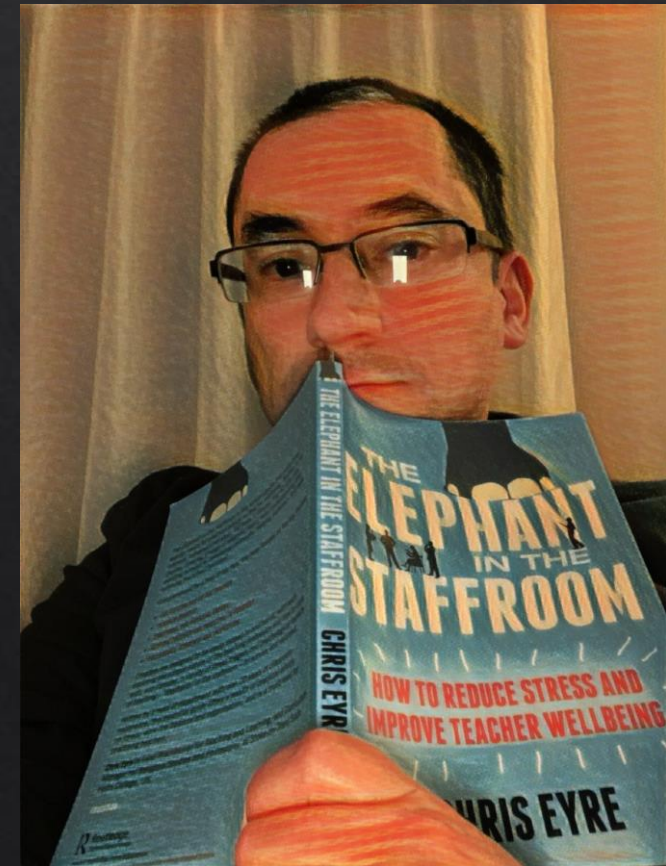
What kinds of factors do you think are or could be a cause of stress for language teachers?

Factors that cause stress

- ◆ Workload
- ◆ Perfectionism
- ◆ Job Insecurity
- ◆ Poor Pay
- ◆ Zero hour contracts
- ◆ Demanding parents
- ◆ Misbehaving students
- ◆ Homesickness
- ◆ Working environment
 - Constant observations
 - Threat of inspections
 - Imposter Syndrome
 - Harassment / Bullying
 - Peer pressure
 - Administration Duties
 - Individual Learning Plans
- ◆ Lack of support
- ◆ Lack of appreciation
- ◆ Meeting deadlines
- ◆ Culture shock
- ◆ Excessive responsibilities
- ◆ Unrealistic expectations

Stress occurs “when there is a mismatch between perceived pressures of the work situation and the individual’s ability to cope with it.”

(Education Service Advisory Committee, 1990, cited in Eyre, p.12)





A good **TEACHER**
is like a candle -
it consumes itself
to **LIGHT** the way
for others.



= burnout


Image Source: <http://www.quotes.cl/good-teacher-is-like-a-candle>

Question.

How confident do you feel at recognising symptoms of burnout in teachers?


Recognising burnout in teachers

- ◆ “Moaning, groaning, complaining.
- ◆ Change in behaviour; e.g. over motivation and enthusiasm can be a compensation reaction to stress.
- ◆ Absenteeism, missing deadlines, days off, extended sick leave.
- ◆ Acting on automatic pilot.
- ◆ Avoiding contact with others, avoiding eye contact.”

 Leadership and Management SIG Newsletter

Preventing burnout at work

Loraine Kennedy reports.



including people-related issues, excessive workload, endless tight deadlines, and the relentlessness of email communications. High pressure at work can lead to an increase in the number of preventable mistakes being made, which in turn can lead to an unhealthy degree of stress. And so the vicious circle commences.

George suggested that certain types tend to be prone to stress, such as the over planners, or those that take on too much, or else those amongst us who are acutely competitive or driven towards continual career advancement.

When looking at resilience, George referred to the work of Salvatore Maddi (2004) who concluded that resilience showed itself through three characteristics:

- **Commitment:** when your self-belief is strong and you hold a firm sense of purpose
- **Control:** when you are able to positively influence events affecting you
- **Challenge:** when you hold a positive attitude to

The Leadership and Management SIG Pre-Conference Event (PCE) at the IATEFL conference in Harrogate in March 2014, attended by around 40 managers, put the spotlight on this subject for the first time. The key questions that underpinned the programme for the day were:

- How can you support your teachers and ensure that they do not burn out?
- How do you prevent burnout in yourself as a manager?
- How do you become more resilient to the pressures of constant change?

Source: Agi Enyedi (2015) *LAMSIG* newsletter Issue no.46.

Preventing burnout in teachers?


- ◆ Individual responsibility
- ◆ Management responsibility:
- ◆ Create a community within the work place.
- ◆ Avoid waste.
- ◆ Keep a balanced number of contact hours
- ◆ Be alert and show care.
- ◆ The signs of burnout are visible.

iatefl

Feature articles

Burnout: the elephant in the staffroom

Monica Ruda brings teacher burnout into the open.



Monica Ruda is a Delta-qualified Senior Teacher and CertTESOL teacher trainer. Her TEFL experience started in 2010 in the Czech Republic, and continued in Italy and in the UK. She is now branching out, as a consultant for Cambridge Assessment and as a co-writer of an ESL activity book.

Why won't anybody talk about it? Because it's an awkward topic to discuss. Nobody wants to talk about something that scares them deep down. Nobody wants to share experiences or thoughts about something that makes them look vulnerable, or even a failure, in the eyes of others. But the road to 'Burnoutville' is a solitary slippery slope, and ignoring the risks can only get you to the destination faster.

What is burnout, exactly?

A quick search on the Internet tells us that burnout is a psychological, stress-related syndrome, which mainly affects individuals who work with, and are responsible for, others.

constantly running on empty and might gradually decrease their motivation levels. These conditions are enough to send anyone around the bend and—let's say it—to cause burnout.

Can burnout be prevented?

Yes, but preventing burnout is a responsibility that falls both on the teacher as an individual and the management team, and it is in everyone's interest to take this on. Burnout is contagious: constant complaints and a negative attitude can spread in the staffroom and transform a productive and stimulating environment into a depressing and demoralising one. This domino effect could have a major impact on the students and on the whole school.

There are several tactics that the teacher could apply in the school, in the classroom and in their personal life to avoid burnout.

Source: Monica Ruda (2018) *IATEFL Voices* 264.

Question.

Should a new employee disclose a diagnosed or undiagnosed mental health condition in a job interview or soon after starting a new teaching job?

YES

MAYBE

NO

How confident do you feel at recognising symptoms of specific mental health conditions?

Activity:

Find some descriptions of **conditions** on the handouts. There are 4 on each handout and 8 in total. Discuss one set of conditions only (1-4 or 5-8) in pairs or groups and decide what kind of diagnosed condition this is describing.



Condition 1: Depression



- A person who is X will have at least two of the following symptoms for at least two weeks:
- An unusually sad mood that does not go away
- Loss of enjoyment and interest in activities that used to be enjoyable
- Lack of energy and tiredness.

Further possible symptoms of X:

- Loss of confidence in themselves or poor self-esteem
- Feeling guilty when they are not really at fault
- Wishing they were dead
- Difficulty in concentrating or making decisions
- Moving more slowly or somethings becoming agitated and unable to settle
- Having difficulty in sleeping or sleeping too much
- Changes in eating habits may lead to either weight loss or putting on weight.

Condition 2: (Hyper) Mania



- Increased energy. The person may suddenly be able to do far more than usual. They will appear restless and can go for long periods with little or no sleep.
- Elated mood. The person will feel high, on top of the world, somewhat invincible.
- Rapid thinking and speech: The person may talk too much, too fast and keep changing the subject.
- Lack of inhibitions: The person may disregard risks, spend money extravagantly, be unusually direct in expressing opinions.
- Grandiose Delusions: These involve very inflated self-esteem / ego. The person going through this can even lead to believing that they have special powers or are an important religious figure.

Condition 3: Bipolar Disorder (manic depression)



- People with X have extreme mood swings.
- They experience often extreme low and high phases, often with periods of 'normal' mood in between.
- In the high phase, someone with X may have huge amounts of energy and feel little need for sleep. They may think and talk faster than usual, and their thoughts may jump rapidly from one subject to another, making them easily distracted and conversation difficult.
- In the low phase, people can feel hopeless, despairing and lethargic, full of self-blame and self-doubt and have difficulty concentrating. This can make it difficult to cope with everyday life. People may withdraw from friends and social contacts, and they may feel suicidal.

Condition 4: Generalised Anxiety Disorder



- X is about overwhelming worry, even when there appears to be no signs of trouble.
- A person with X might experience a fast or pounding heart, headaches, stomach pains, tremors, muscle tension, inability to relax, dizziness, sweating and a dry mouth.
- Other common symptoms include excessive worry, irritability, restlessness, feeling on edge, difficulty concentrating, mind going blank and sleep disturbances.

- X can make it difficult for people to concentrate at work, function at home and generally get on with their lives.
- When symptoms have been present for a while the following might be noticed:
 - Inability of difficulty in making decisions that would normally be easy.
 - Continually seeking reassurance around everyday matters.

Condition 5: Obsessive Compulsive Disorder



- This form of anxiety is a very disabling condition. People experience thoughts of an obsessional or recurring nature accompanying feelings of anxiety.
- These recurring thoughts are impulses or images that the person cannot get rid of. These thoughts are unwanted and often inappropriate and cause marked anxiety in the person.
- Common fears relate to contamination, causing harm to someone else, behaving unacceptably and also having the need for symmetry or exactness.
- Repetitive behaviour can include counting silently or repeating certain words or phrases internally. It may not be obvious to others that someone is engaging in this behaviour just by appearance.

Condition 6: Psychosis / Psychotic Disorder

- People with X experience these changes in emotion and motivation:
- Irritability
- Suspiciousness
- Blunted flat or inappropriate emotion
- Change in appetite
- Reduced energy and motivation
- Changes in thinking and perception
- Difficulties with concentration or attention
- Sense of alteration of self, others or the outside world – e.g. feeling that self or others have changed or are acting differently in some way.
- Unusual perceptual experiences – e.g. a reduction or greater intensity of smell, sound or colour.
- Odd ideas

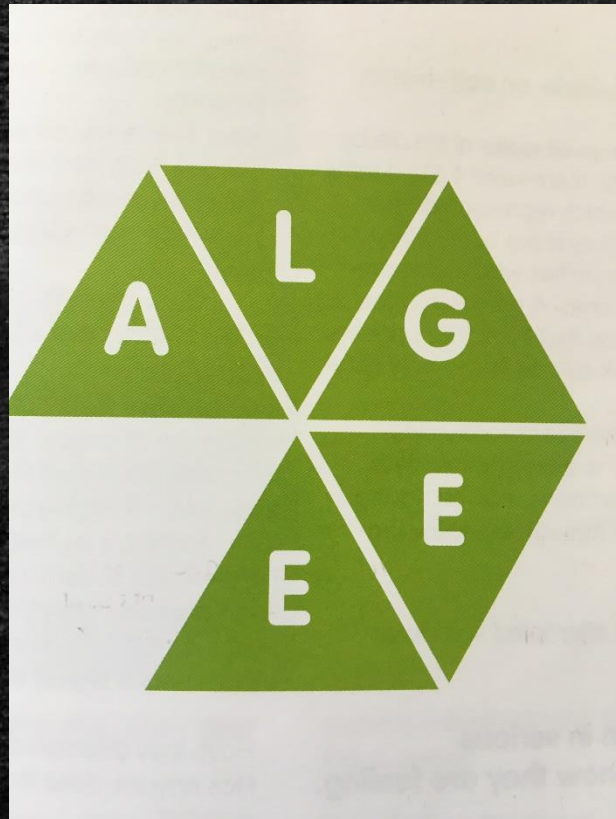
Condition 7: Panic disorder (Panic/Anxiety Attacks)

- People who suffer from X get a sudden onset of intense apprehension, fear or terror. This is inappropriate or irrational given the circumstances in which it is occurring.
- The person experiencing X often feel a sense of impending doom or even death. Many of the physical symptoms are dizziness, shaking, feeling sweaty, nausea, a rush of adrenalin, hyperventilating, numbness or tingling pains, pins and needles and increased heartbeat.
- The amygdala is the primeval part of the body responsible for the 'fight or flight' response. The amygdala is the reason we are afraid of things outside our control. It also controls the way we react to certain *stimuli*, or an event that causes an emotion, that we see as potentially threatening or dangerous.

Condition 8: Schizophrenia

- People with X have a form of psychosis. The most common aspect of this condition are delusions, hallucinations and thinking difficulties.
- Delusions are false beliefs. These can include beliefs of persecution, of guilt, of having a special mission or exalted birth or of being under outside control.
- Hallucinations are false perceptions. They most commonly involve hearing voices. They can also experiencing and sensing things differently. This is especially the case when the voices make negative comments about the person or contain unpleasant ideas.
- There may be difficulties in concentration, memory and ability to plan. These make it more difficult for the person to reason, communicate and complete daily tasks. These are also sometimes called cognitive impairments.
- It does not mean having dual personality.

How can a manager support a language teacher without specific training?

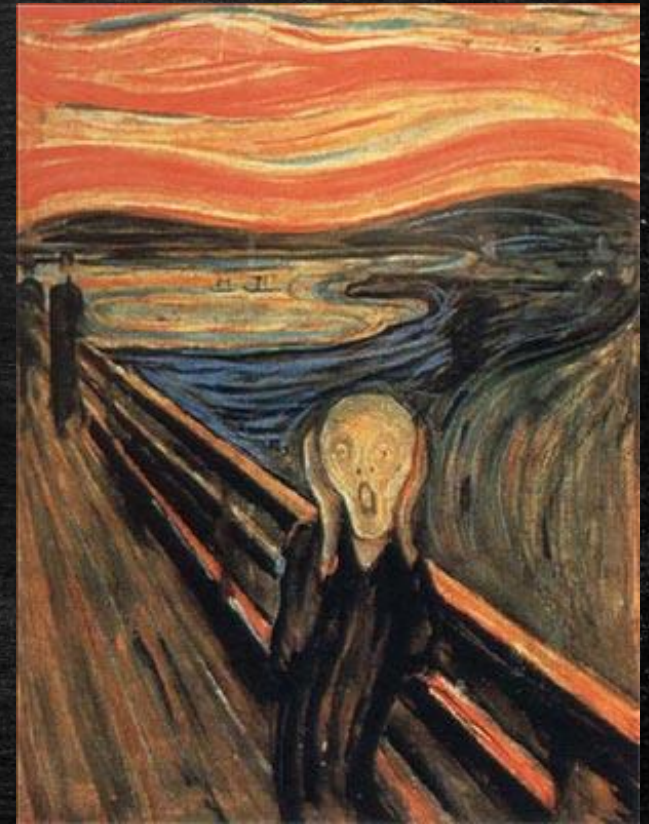


- Assess risk of suicide or self-harm
- Listen non-judgementally
- Give reassurance and information
- Encourage the person to get appropriate professional help
- Encourage self-help strategies.

Dealing with someone suffering an Anxiety or Panic Attack

What advice would you give?

Focus on their breathing.
Focus on their senses.
Try grounding techniques.
Distractions and focus.
Offer to stay with the person.
Self Care.
Talk to someone you can trust.



In what ways can an institution support the mental health and wellbeing of its employees?

- Training
- Counselling
- Awareness Raising
- Free stress management or mindfulness courses
- Taking steps to avoid teacher burnout
- Have a designated, informed person who is responsible for teacher wellbeing and mental health.
- Improve teacher pay and conditions.
- Union representation / Local Association membership.
- Work to free teachers from discrimination and abuse.
- Acknowledge the human part of 'human resources'

Mental Health Resources

WORKPLACE WELLBEING TOOLKIT

A STRATEGIC GUIDE TO CREATING A MENTALLY HEALTHY ORGANISATION

STEP 1 SENSITISE LAY THE GROUNDWORK

INTRODUCE THE IDEA OF TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Download the **Take 10 Together posters** to give people a taster of mental health awareness and MHFA skills

Download our short adaptable slide deck, **Making the business case for mental health** and use it to engage your leadership in the mental health agenda

If you have any existing support schemes in place, make sure all employees know it's there and how to access it

See the results of Business in the Community's survey: **Revealing the scale of mental ill health in the workplace**

Sign the **Time to Change Employer Pledge**

LET'S TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

DOWNLOAD OUR INFOGRAPHIC: MEASURING THE IMPACT

STEP 2 SKILLS EMBED PRACTICAL SKILLS

THROUGH QUALITY TRAINING, EMPOWER EMPLOYEES TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER

Give managers our **Line Managers' Resource** for guidance on how to support employees experiencing a mental health issue

Download our **whole organisation training framework**, or work with MHFA England to design a bespoke approach

Learn more about Mental Health First Aid **face-to-face and eLearning courses**

Download **The role of the Mental Health First Aider**

Signpost your Mental Health First Aiders around the workplace with these adaptable **first aid posters**, so that everyone knows where to go when they need support

Your Mental Health First Aiders are here for you

KEEP MEASURING IMPACT

STEP 3 SUSTAINABILITY MAINTAIN MOMENTUM

KEEP DISSEMINATING SKILLS AND AWARENESS

In large organisations, we recommend training employees as in-house Mental Health First Aid instructors who can keep delivering courses to suit the changing needs of your organisation

Learn about our Royal Society for Public Health accredited **Instructor Training programme**

Download **The role of the Mental Health First Aid Instructor**

In smaller organisations, running 'lunch and learn' sessions or webinars with your Mental Health First Aiders can be a great way to raise awareness

Invite colleagues or external speakers in to talk about their lived experience of mental ill health, or get involved in the **This Is Me** campaign

Create a peer support network by setting up a mentoring scheme and encouraging employees to sign up as mentors/mentees

SEE HOW DIFFERENT ORGANISATIONS USE MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING IN THE WORKPLACE IN OUR SHORT FILM CLIPS

MHFA England

To find out more, or to book Mental Health First Aid training for your organisation, visit: mhfaengland.org/organisations



Source: Mental Health First Aid England

Mental Health Resources

Teacher Phili
English Language Tutor – originally from London but now living and working in Norwich, UK.

Home About Presentations and Documents #ELTchat Summaries Videos



APRIL 4, 2018 BY TEACHERPHILI

The Mental Health of English Language Teachers: Research Findings

This is an extensive summary of the **original research** I carried out in December 2017. It is published to coincide with a 30 minute talk at the **IATEFL** (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language) conference, in Brighton on 10 April 2018. It is my first ever presentation at any ELT conference.



Longwell, P. (2018) *The Mental Health of English Language Teachers: Research Findings*.

[A-Z of Self Care for Teachers | The Best Ticher \(Elly Setterfield\)](#)
[Agi Enyedi - How to avoid teacher burnout \(BC webinar\)](#)
[BAAL Recommendations for Good Practice - full.pdf](#)
[Be kind to yourself! | Neil Millington - TeachingEnglish | British Council | BBC](#)
[Beating Burnout & Avoiding Stress: Top Tips from/for Teachers – Clare's ELT Compendium](#)
[Beneath the surface - EL Gazette](#)
[BESIG Blog > Five great ways to boost Language Trainer wellbeing](#)
[Bonus task: Self-talk and teacher confidence \(ELT Playbook 1\) | Sandy Millin](#)
[Bullying, harassment and workplace abuses: Kieran's story | ELT Advocacy Ireland](#)
[Burnout in ELT | iTDi Blog](#)
[Employable Me | All at C](#)
[Five Great ways to boost Language Trainer wellbeing - by Phil Nash - BESIG Blog](#)
[FreeBook: Flipping the System - Routledge](#)
[How Many Times Do You Have To Start Again, Again, Again...? | howtofailatlifesuccessfully](#)
[How should I deal with workplace anxiety? - denise cowle editorial services](#)
[I'm a 1st Year Teacher and I'm Burned Out – Edmodo – Medium](#)
[IATEFL webinar recording - Mental Health Awareness for Employers within ELT](#)
[Identifying and tackling teacher burnout | MET](#)
[Interview for Teachers as Workers SIG by Phil Longwell](#)
[June issue 2018 – Cover | Elgazette](#)
[Language Teacher Psychology – Achilleas Kostoulas](#)
[LGBTQ mental health | Mind, the mental health charity - help for mental health problems](#)

[Mental Health in ELT – Lizzie Pinard](#)

[Mind Wide Open | Feet firmly on the ground](#)

[Minds Matter: Psychology of language learning | Q&A - Oxford University Press](#)

[New figures released on Time to Talk Day reveal the “devastating” human cost of mental health stigma | Time To Change](#)

[Not surviving but thriving: Teacher psychology and professional wellbeing: A conversation with Sarah Mercer | ETAS Plenary session by Sarah Mercer | IATEFL Online](#)

[Sarah Mercer Macmillan Webinar -Strategies to promote and protect language teacher well-being Advancing Learning \(Dec 2018\)](#)

[Secret Teacher: Class, I wish I'd told you the truth about my mental health | Teacher Network | The Guardian](#)

[Stress Awareness Discussion Points #teacher5aday – Clare's ELT Compendium](#)

[Supporting workplaces to be mentally healthy | Mind, the mental health charity - help for mental health problems](#)

[Teachers are at breaking point. It's time to push wellbeing up the agenda | Teacher Network | The Guardian](#)

[Teachers' well-being and mental health: an #ELTchat summary – Muddles into Maxims](#)

[Teaching can also support your mental health. Here's how \(Tom Rogers\)](#)

[The Elephant In The \(Staff\) Room - Why We Need To Talk About Teacher Wellbeing | The Huffington Post](#)

[The Pool | Health - How to support a friend who is struggling with their mental health](#)

[The Well-Being Talking Shop – Teachers as Workers Special Interest Group](#)

[Time to talk about ... mental health: Interview with Phil Longwell – Teachers as Workers Special Interest Group](#)

[Useful links on Mental Health in ELT | Sandy Millin](#)

[What to do when you can't stop criticising yourself | The Best Ticher](#)

[Why mental health matters | ELTjam](#)

[You don't have to be mad to work here « The Secret DOS](#)

References:



Devon, N. (2019). *Mental health sufferers like me will only thrive once employers step up and support us*. <https://metro.co.uk/2019/01/17/mental-health-sufferers-like-will-thrive-employers-step-support-us-8347537/>

Devon, N. (2018). *A Beginner's Guide to Being Mental: An A-Z*. London: Pan McMillan.

Education Support Partnership / YouGov. (2017) Health Survey 2017. Available at: <https://www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk/resources/research-reports/2017-health-survey>

Enyedi, A in Kennedy, L. (2015) 'Preventing burnout at work' LAMSIG newsletter Issue no.46.

Eyre, C. (2017) *The Elephant in the Staffroom: How to Reduce Stress and Improve Teacher Wellbeing*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Longwell, P. (2018) *The Mental Health of English Language Teachers: Research Findings*. Available at: <https://teacherphili.wordpress.com/2018/04/04/the-mental-health-of-english-language-teachers-research-findings/>

Longwell, P. (2018b) 'Beneath the surface' in EL Gazette. Available at: <http://www.elgazette.com/item/517-beneath-the-surface.html>

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England course (2015) www.mhfaengland.org
Mental Health First Aid England <https://mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/resources/>

Millin, S. (2017) Useful links on mental health in elt
<https://sandymillin.wordpress.com/2017/02/02/useful-links-on-mental-health-in-elt/>

Nicholls, C. (2018). Employers must do more to protect the mental health of staff in The Guardian. Accessed 21 November. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/12/employers-do-more-protect-mental-health-staff>

Ruda, Monica (2018) *Burnout: the elephant in the staffroom*. IATEFL Voices 264.

Serra, R. (2017) *Burnout in ELT*. Available at: <http://itdi.pro/blog/2017/10/13/burnout-in-elt/>