

Being Proactive with your Wellness

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At the start of a new school year, it is easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle that September brings—new students, new assignments, and new routines. After the summer break, you may be feeling ready to throw yourself back into a new school year. However, before you dive in headfirst, it is important to take time to consider one often overlooked factor: your own wellbeing. No matter how you felt by the end of last June, now is the time to take steps to set yourself up for a successful year.

Reflect

Maybe you finished the last school year feeling pretty good. If that's the case, what did you do that made the school year successful? How did you address challenges when they came up? Are there any areas for improvement?

You may have struggled to make it to the end of June or been left feeling not-so-great at some points throughout the year. Maybe this was a new feeling for you or maybe you've noticed a pattern of difficulties across many school years. Before you get too busy, take time to reflect on how you felt throughout the last school year. In what ways did you feel unwell (physically, mentally, etc.)? At what point did you notice you were having difficulty with your wellness? What were the warning signs? Were there challenges during the school year that you weren't prepared for?

Plan

Now that you have a better understanding of what went wrong—or right, you can use that knowledge to plan. If things went well for you last school year, how can you implement a similar plan for this year? Did you do something different compared to previous years that led to your success? Maybe you started your report cards earlier rather than leaving them to the last minute, talked to a counsellor, or started going for walks at lunch with a coworker. Whatever it was, how can you keep that in place, and maybe even build on it?

If things didn't go well last school year, what will you do differently this year? Can you predict some of the challenges you may face this school year and plan to address them? Are there resources or supports you could put in place to

ensure you feel better this year? It can be difficult to implement wide-sweeping changes all at once, so you may find it more manageable to pick one or two small things to focus on. Once you've got the hang of those, you can add more.

Act

Once you've made your plan for the year, it's time to start putting it into action. Challenge yourself to act before the end of the month, even if you're still feeling good. The further you get into the school year, the busier things become, and the more likely it is that your own wellbeing will be put on the back burner. This can create bigger problems down the road if issues aren't addressed as they arise.

As you're settling into a new routine, now is the time to incorporate habits that will contribute to your wellness, rather than detracting from it. Small actions like making an appointment with a healthcare provider, blocking off time in your calendar regularly for self-care, or adjusting your classroom or workstation can go a long way in improving your wellbeing throughout the school year. You can also take a few minutes to check out the programs that are available to you free of charge through the NSTU's Member Assistance Program at nstuinsurance.ca.

The NSTU's Early Intervention Program is available to members who are working or on paid sick leave and are experiencing an illness or injury. For more information on the Early Intervention Program, visit nstuinsurance.ca. To self-refer to the program, please email nurse@nstu.ca or call 1-800-565-6788.

