Arms Outstretched — We’re here for you!

School PR is a rewarding career with polarizing highs and lows. We find joy in celebrating achievements and sadness in supporting tragedies. In our roles, we are expected to process the most difficult, traumatic and unimaginable situations that our families experience — and in these moments, it's our role to support our colleagues and school community.

Continuous coverage of traumatic events at the district, national and international levels and constant intake of issues can impact our mental health and well-being. Our greatest resource to support each other is through our NSPRA network.

A passion for helping others is our strength, but it can take a toll. What should you watch for — with yourself, or your NSPRA friends?

Signs that it’s time to focus on wellbeing

- Finding less joy in creative work and/or being around students.
- Reduced inspiration to try new things or explore new ideas.
- Increased use of alcohol or other mind-altering substances to unwind, numb, or forget troubles.
- Joking about difficult emotions, stress or pain. (Laughing is healthy — making a habit of telling jokes to mask your pain is not.)
- Handling stress by “staying busy,” instead of letting down.
- Decreased engagement with others you care about (coworkers, family, etc.) — increased isolation and loneliness.
- Sense of feeling lost, paralyzed, completely drained, and/or unable to recover in a day off or weekend.
- Physical signs of stress within the body, such as involuntarily holding your breath, disrupted sleep or change in appetite.
- Moodiness or difficulty getting along with people at work, or at home.
- Inability to turn off your phone or device and engage with others around you, or have quiet alone time, unplugged.
- Difficulty knowing, honoring and enjoying who you are as a person, independent of your job, title or reputation.
- An urge to be on social media, especially engaging or ruminating on topics that are inflammatory or emotional. Or having trouble letting these interactions go, even when you are offline.

Steps to focus on being well

- Embrace how thoughtful boundaries can create a healthy and balanced life that accommodates the demands of your job without sacrificing your wellbeing, including caring relationships and quiet time outside of work.
- Consider how your boundaries will need to shift during a sustained crisis response to meet the district’s needs — and after a crisis to replenish your reserves and restore your wellbeing.
- Share your healthy boundaries with your supervisor at a time of relative quiet. Consider breaking the ice this way: “I care so much about this district and want to provide my best service to our students, staff and families. My own wellness is critical to my ability to do my best, so here are some boundaries that I believe can help me be at the top of my game for you and our district.”
- Consider using the Do Not Disturb setting on your phone for at least 2 hours each evening and for several hours each weekend.
- Make regular, healthy sleep a priority. Learn how to set up your cell phone so that it won’t wake you from sleep, except in case of an emergency.
- Invest in your wellbeing while you’re at work; even five minutes in your day makes a difference. Use simple deep breathing exercises, gentle stretches, a short walk or a quiet drive.
- When the evening and weekend arrive, prioritize personal relationships in your life — family and/or close friends — over the demands of work. Remind yourself of the healthy boundaries you have set, and make it your priority to honor them. Most times, e-mail can wait until office hours.
- Recharge your personal energy by engaging in social activities or carving out time for quiet and pleasant solitude.
- Recognize the benefits of fresh air, nature and exposure to sunshine. Consider adding regular physical activity to your weekly routine.
- Use appropriate leave benefits to ensure you have a chance to take a deep breath and step away when you are drained. Remember, your leave time is part of your compensation and, within the expectations of your position, you have the right to decide how and when to use it.
- Recognize when your needs exceed simple self-care. Know what is offered through an employee assistance program and support services available in your community. In an emergency, do not hesitate to call 911.